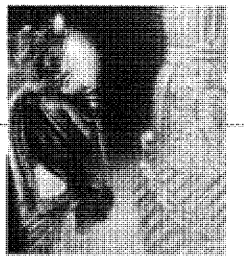
The Complete Book of Chess Strategy

Grandmaster Techniques from A to Z

by IM Jeremy Silman

THE COMPLETE BOOK OF CHESS STRATEGY



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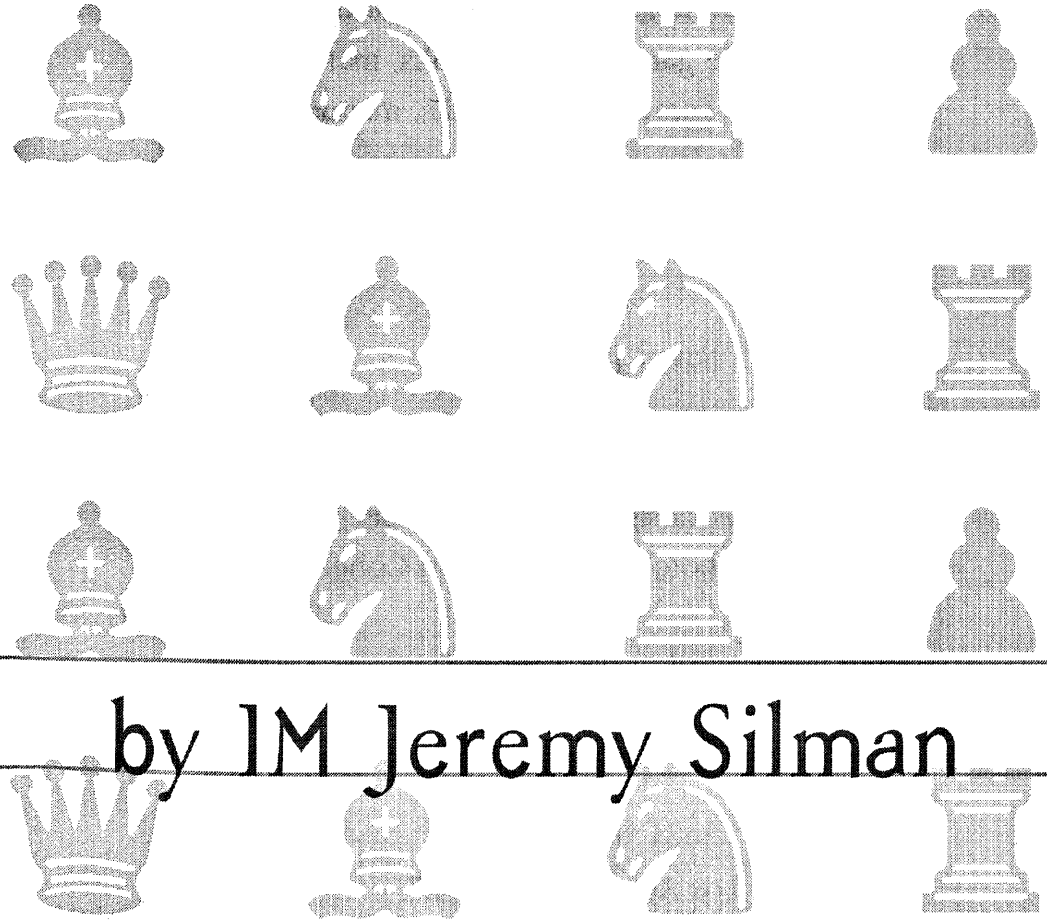

by IM Jeremy Silman

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To my wife Gwen, who made this project possible.
And, to all the students I've had over the years who took notes and gave me the idea for this book.

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INTRODUCTION

Years ago I heard a student lament that he wasn't able to read a chess book and digest its lessons in a proper way—he couldn't understand what the book was really trying to teach him.

I thought a lot about his complaint. It finally dawned on me that the vast majority of books are so filled with soulless rhetoric that it would take a genius to sift through the all the glittering rocks to find that one tiny bit of gold that may or may not be floating somewhere in its pages.

Positions and moves won't teach you much without carefully chosen words to fill in the gaps. Sadly, that's what most chess books are made of—positions and moves with little or no proper explanation.

One day I noticed another student diligently writing in a notebook. He explained that he would take the salient points of his studies and my lessons and write them down in a simple, easy to understand form. This way he could go to a tournament and review this material before his games. No digging was necessary, no hard work, just instant facts and strategies waiting at his fingertips.

This book is a more detailed version of that extremely practical notebook. All aspects of basic strategy and tactics are presented in a simple, easy to absorb manner. You look at the information you want to learn, it tells you what you need to know and gives you a quick illustration, and then you move on to the next fact.

I have presented the material in four parts: The Opening, The Middlegame, The Endgame, and Practical Matters. All the information in these sections is presented in alphabetical order so you can access it immediately.

Finally, I have added quizzes at the end of each section so you can test yourself and see if you really understood the material.

This book was written for players in the class "E" (pre-tournament or beginning tournament) through class "A" (experienced tournament) categories. It gives advice about chess psychology, tells you how to handle different types of structural problems, gives you the basics on all major openings, provides instruction for would be attackers, and...well, you name it, I've tried to address it!

My intention in writing this book is to help players who have nowhere else to turn, so let me know if I have succeeded in answering your questions. If I've overlooked some important subject, write to me (care of Siles Press) and I will add it to a future edition.

Jeremy Silman
March 1998

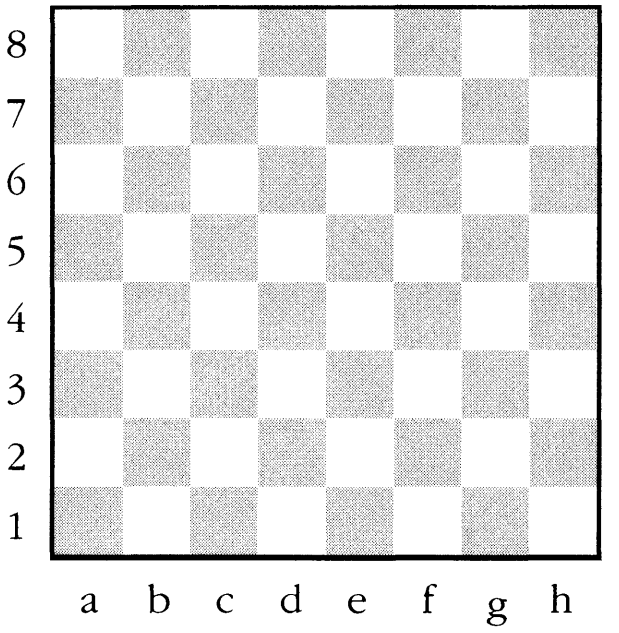
SYMBOL LEGEND

!	=	excellent move.
!!	=	brilliant move.
!?	=	interesting move.
?!	=	dubious move.
?	=	poor move.
??	=	blunder.

CHESS NOTATION

Algebraic notation is a simple, straightforward way to write down the moves to a chess game. Universally used, it gives a single name to every square of a chessboard (as shown in diagram 2). The eight files from left to right are labeled a-h. The eight ranks (from White's position, which is always at the bottom, to Black's, which is always at the top) are numbered one to eight.

(1)



If we join the numbers and letters, we can give each square a clear "name."

(2)

a8	b8	c8	d8	e8	f8	g8	h8
a7	b7	c7	d7	e7	f7	g7	h7
a6	b6	c6	d6	e6	f6	g6	h6
a5	b5	c5	d5	e5	f5	g5	h5
a4	b4	c4	d4	e4	f4	g4	h4
a3	b3	c3	d3	e3	f3	g3	h3
a2	b2	c2	d2	e2	f2	g2	h2
a1	b1	c1	d1	e1	f1	g1	h1

This complicated-looking grid (in diagram 2) may appear to be some sort of Martian code, but in reality it can be mastered in a few minutes. The trick is to name the square where you moved a piece, but first place the first letter of that particular piece in front of the "code."

For example, if you move a Queen, you would use a "Q." If you moved the King you would use a "K." A Knight is listed as "N" (Kt is also acceptable) while a Bishop is simply "B." A Rook is (surprise!) "R." If you move a pawn, don't bother giving any letter; just name the square.

Six other notational tidbits:

1) Numbers followed by a period are the move numbers. "1." stands for the first move, "2." stands for the second move, and on and on it goes.

2) When you capture a piece, place a small "x" between the letter of the piece and the name of the square.

(3)

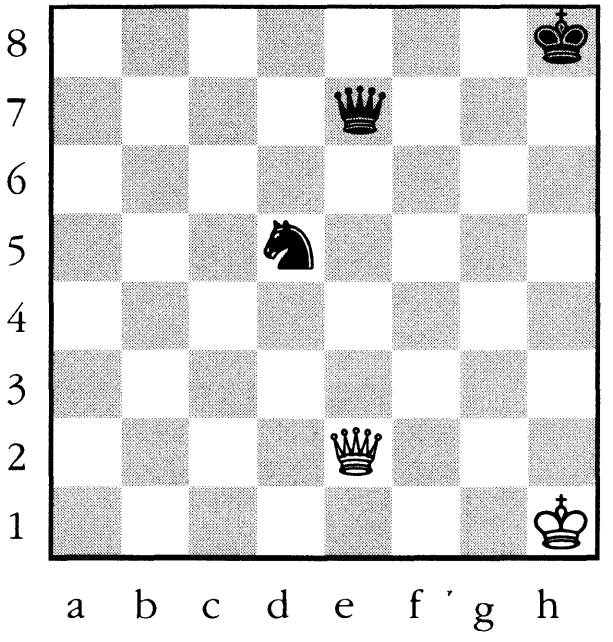
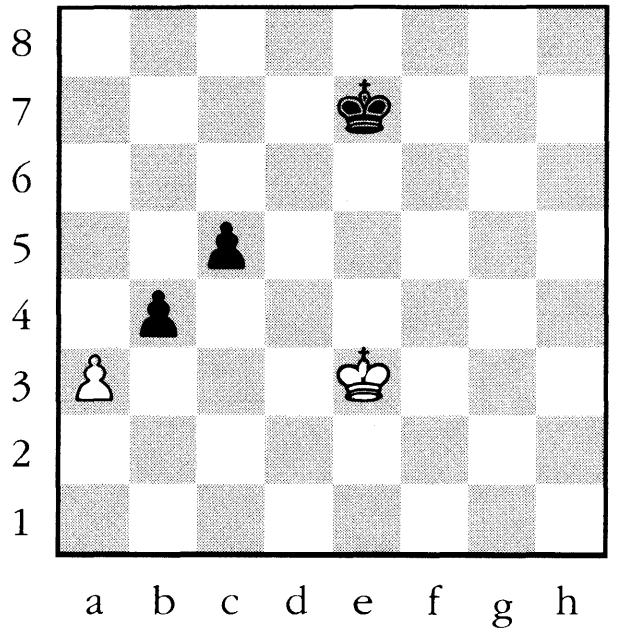


Diagram 3 shows us a typical move (a move by White and a move by Black constitutes one whole move). Both sides make a capture: 1.Qxe7 Nxe7.

3) If your pawn captures something, list the letter of the square it came from and the square it is going to. Place the "x" between them.

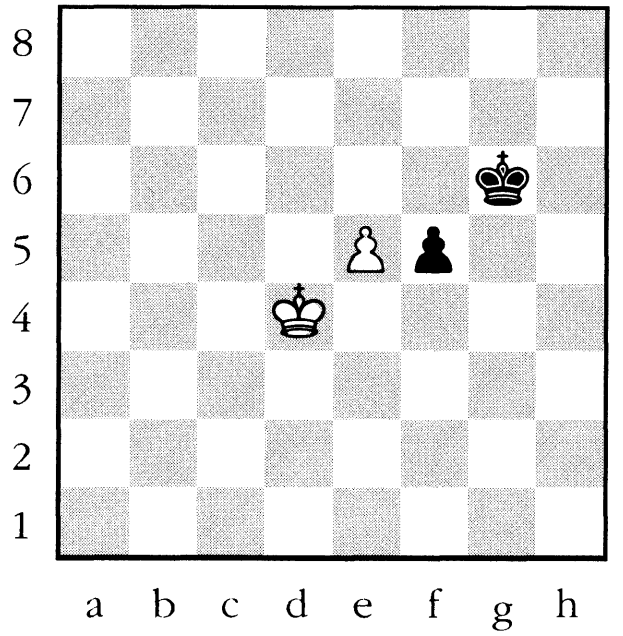
(4)



The position in diagram 4 shows a pawn capture by both sides: 1.axb4 cxb4.

4) If you take an enemy pawn while using the *en passant* rule, give the square your pawn is going to, not the square the enemy pawn was on.

(5)

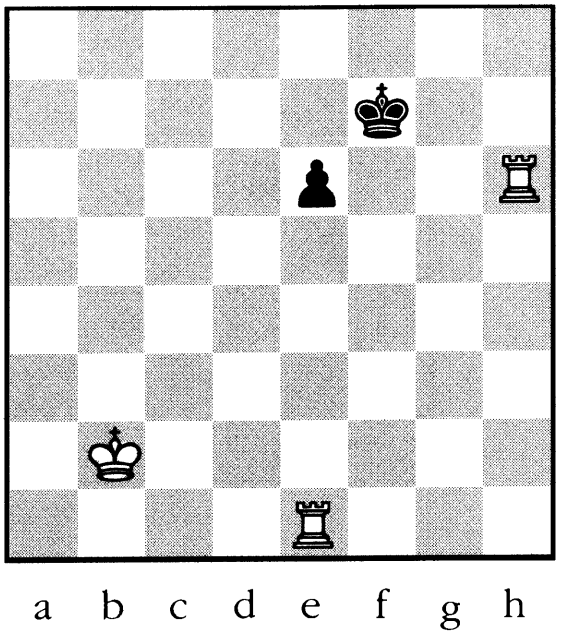


In diagram 5 Black has just advanced his pawn from f7 to f5 (1...f5). White now makes use of the *en passant* rule and chops

the pawn off. His pawn would move to f6 and the f5-pawn would disappear off the board (the move would be written as: 2.exf6).

5) If two pieces can go to the same square, list the square your piece moved from.

(6)



(Which Rook is going to take on e6?)

If White uses his h6-Rook to take Black's e6-pawn (in diagram 6), you would write: 1.Rhxe6 (you could also write: 1.Rh6xe6). The other capture would be 1.Rexe6.

6) The only other special move to remember is castling. This may be done once per game (for each King) provided:

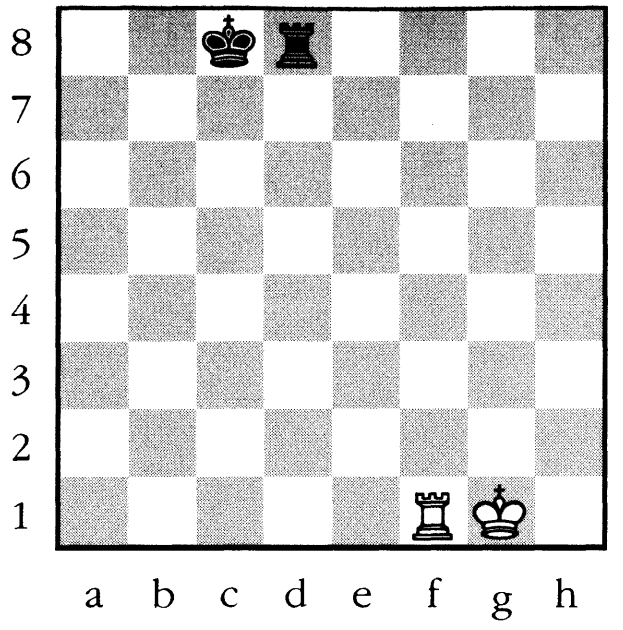
   a) Neither King nor Rook has moved (if one Rook has moved, you may still castle on the side of the unmoved Rook).

   b) The King is not in check.

   c) The King does not cross an attacked square.

In castling, the King moves two squares towards its Rook while the Rook jumps to the other side of the King. Kingside castling is written "0-0" while queenside castling is "0-0-0."

(7)

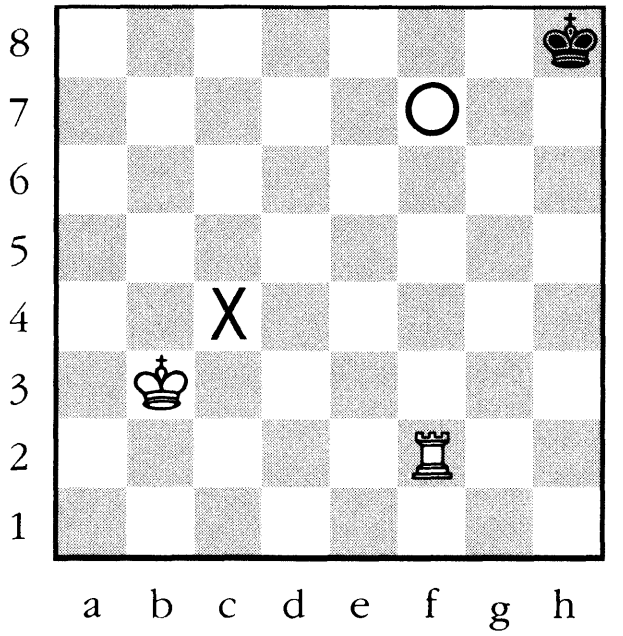


(Both sides have castled on opposite sides of the board)

In diagram 7, White has castled kingside (0-0) while Black has castled queenside (0-0-0).

Now that you have all the necessary information, it's time to let you strut your stuff!

(8)



(Kc4 or Rf7)

In diagram 8 we see two symbols (the symbols are there to draw your attention to that particular square). If you moved your

King to the square with the X in it, you would write: Kc4. If you moved your Rook to f7, you would write: Rf7.

Pretty simple, isn't it? Nevertheless, expect to get confused from time to time until you give yourself the chance to practice this information. Before you know it, writing down (and reading) chess moves will be second nature.

PART ONE

THE OPENING

The opening is the first stage of the game. Here, both sides develop their forces and create plans that will influence the proceedings throughout the contest.

Some players try to master this phase by memorizing large chunks of analysis found in thousands of opening books. Others simply try to understand the strategies of these openings, hoping that this will enable them to figure out the correct way to proceed in any situation.

Unfortunately, memorization without true understanding often leads to bad results as soon as you step out of your book knowledge. I've seen players bash out their first twenty moves and, suddenly being on their own, resign three moves later (obviously, those personal moves showed no understanding of the position at all!).

Clearly, amateurs do much better when they try and understand the basic themes of the openings they play. Because of this,

I've presented the themes of all major openings in the following pages. This should enable any chess student to quickly assimilate the ins and outs of their favorite systems.

BASIC OPENING STRATEGY

Most players think that the opening is centered around the development of the respective armies. While true in a limited sense, this is actually a view that misses the big picture. The real purpose of the opening is to create a difference (or a series of differences) in the respective positions and then develop your army around these facts.

For example, if you (as White) get to advance your pawns to d4 and e4, while your opponent places his pawns on d6 and e6, you will enjoy a spatial plus. You would then develop your forces in such a manner as to highlight this advantage.

Another typical example centers around Black playing ...Bc8-g4x(Kt)f3. This common exchange creates an imbalance of Bishop versus Knight. As soon as this appears on the board, White would place his pieces and pawns on squares that highlight the powers of his Bishop(s). Black, on the other hand, would play for a closed position (which is known to favor Knights) and would try hard to create advanced support points that would ultimately enable his horses to become equal or superior to the enemy Bishops.

A wonderful discussion of opening ideas and theory can be found in the classic book *How To Open A Chess Game* by Grandmasters Evans, Gligoric, Hort, Petrosian, Portisch, Keres, and Larsen. A more advanced opening treatise, *Opening Preparation,* by Dvoretsky and Yusupov, also comes highly recommended.

CASTLING

This very important move allows you to do two things at once:

1) You are able to get your King out of the center (where it gets in the way of the Rooks and is vulnerable to enemy central attacks);

2) You are able to get a Rook to the center (where it can defend key central pawns or find activity on open central files).

Many amateurs put off castling or avoid it altogether. This is a serious mistake! In general, you should get castled as quickly as possible. Most decisive forays into the enemy camp should only be undertaken after you get your King safely castled.

Castling can be delayed if the center is closed because the enemy pieces won't be able to get to your King due to the lack of open files and diagonals. Castling can also be avoided if an early exchange of Queens occurs that precludes the possibility of any kind of central assault.

The existence of an open center should be likened to a neon sign saying: "Castle immediately! Castle immediately!"

DEVELOPMENT

It is important to DEVELOP your whole army. Note the word "whole." Some players get a few pieces out and launch an attack. The correct way to play chess is to develop each and every piece (chess is a team game!), get your King safely castled, and only then begin more aggressive maneuvers.

The necessity for quick development depends on the type of center that exists. For example, if the center is closed, development is not necessarily a priority because the enemy pieces won't be able to break into your position. However, if the center is open (meaning that open files and diagonals penetrate into your camp), development takes on great significance.

A typical beginner's mistake centers around the Queen: In general, don't move her too early! Because of the Queen's enormous value, she is vulnerable to tempo-gaining attacks by lesser enemy units. A good rule of thumb calls for the Queen to be developed no further than the second or third ranks (far from the touch of enemy pieces). You should only use her in a more aggressive manner later in the game.

FIANCHETTO

This Italian word (pronounced fyan-ket-to) means "on the flank" and alludes to a White Bishop placed on g2 or b2 and a Black Bishop placed on g7 or b7.

A glance at the chessboard shows us that the a8-h1 and h8-a1 diagonals are the longest on the board. It stands to reason then, that developing a Bishop onto this "highway" might turn out to be a very good idea.

In response to this, various openings have been devised where White or Black fianchettos a Bishop in the hope of making it as active as possible. Examples of this are *Larsen's Opening* (1.b3 followed by 2.Bb2), *Réti's Opening* (1.Nf3 followed by 2.g3 and 3.Bg2) and the *King's Indian Defense* (1.d4 Nf6 2.c4 g6 3.Nc3 Bg7), to name only a few.

OPENING SYSTEMS

Every serious player needs some sort of opening repertoire. Though a certain amount of memorization is required, you can go a long way by simply knowing the basic ideas, structures and plans. The following breakdown of opening systems—and their strategic ideas—will give you this knowledge on a platter.

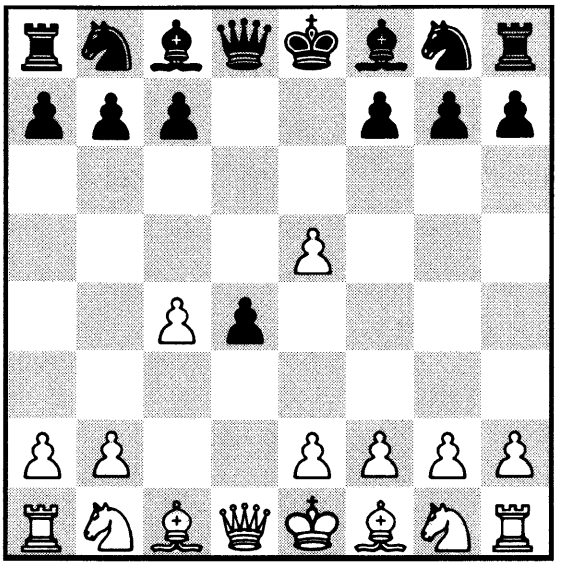
Choosing an opening repertoire is mainly a matter of taste. If you're a wild attacking player, you will want a system that gives you chances to build up pressure against the enemy King (as White, 1.e4 is probably the best choice. As Black, the *King's Indian Defense* against 1.d4 would suit your purposes nicely). If you get excited by long bouts of positional maneuvering, 1.d4 would be a good choice with the White pieces, while a *Caro-Kann* versus 1.e4 and a *Slav* versus 1.d4 would make you feel comfortable as Black.

When you do pick some systems, stick with them for at least a year. Play them in blitz, play them in tournaments, explore them in your dreams. Expect to suffer many reversals due to inexperience. However, instead of getting depressed about a loss, look at any bad opening result as a learning opportunity that allows you to slowly but surely hone your line into a fearsome weapon of mass destruction.

Albin Counter Gambit

This is one of those systems (**1.d4 d5 2.c4 e5 3.dxe5 d4**) where Black tries to grab the initiative by sacrificing a pawn for some central space and an easy development.

(9)



(Black throws an early punch with the *Albin Counter Gambit*)

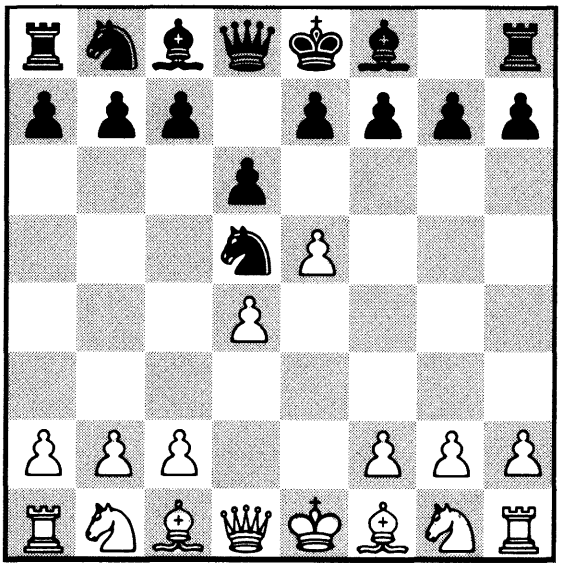
Never considered to be completely sound, the positions are nevertheless sharp and interesting. After **4.Nf3 Nc6 5.g3** (5.Nbd2 is also critical) White will castle kingside with Bg2 and 0-0 while Black will castle queenside with ...Be6 (or ...Bg4) and ...0-0-0. A race to attack the enemy King then begins with White playing a2-a3 followed by b2-b4, and Black playing ...h7-h5-h4.

Alekhine's Defense

Popularized in 1921 by the great Alexander Alekhine, but analyzed as early as 1819 by Allgaier, *Alekhine's Defense* is a hypermodern opening in every sense of the word. Black's immediate attack against e4 (after **1.e4 Nf6**) ignores the general wisdom that recommends building a strong pawn center. Instead, Black is willing to lose time in an effort to goad the White pawns down the board. Are these advanced pawns strong or weak? White has one opinion while Black has quite another!

After **2.e5 Nd5 3.d4 d6** (nibbling at White's center), the first player usually chooses between two different setups (though several other choices are possible):

(10)



(Is the pawn center strong or weak?)

1) White can grab the whole center with **4.c4 Nb6 5.f4** though Black's pressure against these pawns after **5...dxe5 6.fxe5 Nc6 7.Be3 Bf5 8.Nc3 e6** followed by ...Be7, ...0-0 and ...f6 seems to guarantee him an equal game.

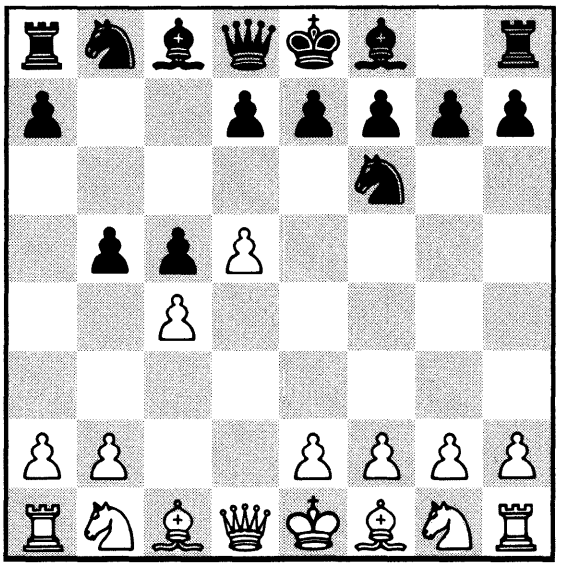
2) White avoids any kind of over extension by playing simple but effective developing moves: **4.Nf3 Bg4** Also popular is 4...g6. **5.Be2 e6 6.0-0** followed by c2-c4 when the White center pawns make Black's life difficult.

Benko Gambit

Though played on occasion (in a slightly different form) in the 1930s, this gambit was not really appreciated as a positional weapon until Grandmaster Pal Benko's employment of it in the early 1970s (later champions of this line were American Grandmasters Walter Browne and John Fedorowicz).

The sacrifice on move three (after **1.d4 Nf6 2.c4 c5 3.d5 b5**) seems odd at first sight, but Black happily parts with a pawn so that he can open the a-file and b-file for his Rooks. This will lead to a powerful and long lasting queenside initiative, and not all White players are happy to defend from such an early juncture.

(11)



(Offering a pawn for long lasting positional pressure)

Though various methods of declining the gambit have been tried (4.Nf3 is quite common), the most challenging continuation has to be **4.cxb5** when **4...a6** dares White to eat the pawn and open those two files for Black. Aside from the sharp (and popular) **5.f3 axb5 6.e4**, which creates immediate threats in the center, White usually tries:

1) **5.b6** This prevents the opening of the a-file and gives Black far less counterplay than he normally acquires. **5...Qxb6 6.Nc3 d6 7.e4** The immediate 7.Nf3 g6 8.Nd2 is

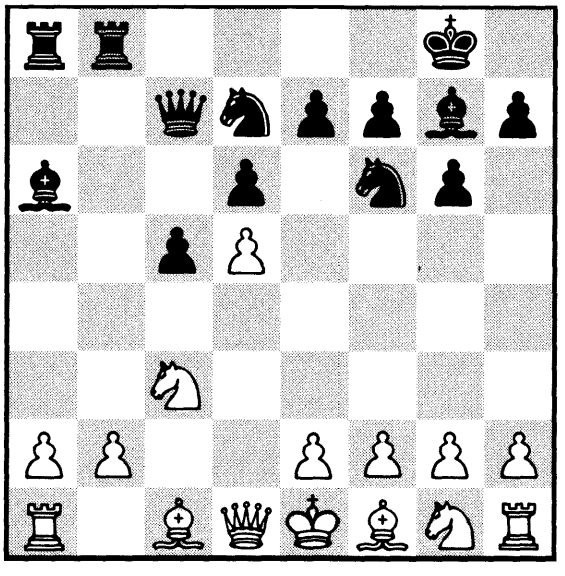
also possible. The position after 7.e4 has proven bothersome to many *Benko Gambit* players. White starts his central play while also eyeing the c4-square as a home for a Knight (via Ng1-f3-d2-c4). If a Knight does reach this post, a timely a2-a4-a5 gives White control of b6 also.

Of course, White isn't a pawn up (as he would be in the main lines), but his positional pressure in the center (White is playing for an eventual e4-e5 advance) and access to weak queenside squares for his pieces make this a safe way to play for the first player.

Black's counterplay (as usual) comes by pressure on the b-file and/or a possible central blow by ...e7-e6.

2) **5.bxa6 Bxa6 6.Nc3 d6** gives White an extra pawn and play in the center (via e2-e4 and f2-f4), but Black's counterplay on the a-file and b-file must not be underestimated. One reason that this opening is popular on the amateur level is that Black's moves are easy to play: ...g7-g6, ...Bg7, ...0-0, ...Nbd7, ...Qb6, ...Rfb8 with a very harmonious position.

(12)



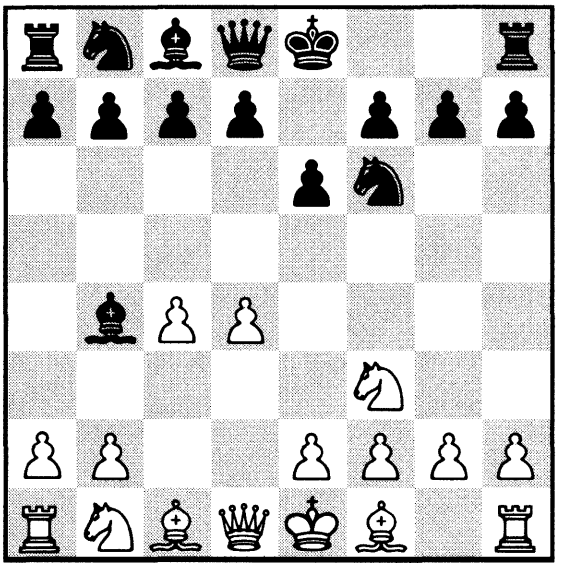
(Ideal Black setup)

Another bonus is that even an exchange of Queens leaves Black with strong pressure. Take the Queens off the board in diagram 12 and Black will still have lots of pressure on the White position.

Bogo-Indian Defense

This opening mixes aspects of the *Nimzo-Indian* and the *Queen's Indian*. The check (after **1.d4 Nf6 2.c4 e6 3.Nf3 Bb4+**) not only develops a piece, it also forces White to make a tough decision: how should he get his King out of danger? Since 4.Nc3 leads to *Nimzo-Indian* positions (which are discussed elsewhere), White usually chooses between 1) **4.Bd2** and 2) **4.Nbd2**. Let's take a look at both:

(13)



(*Bogo-Indian*)

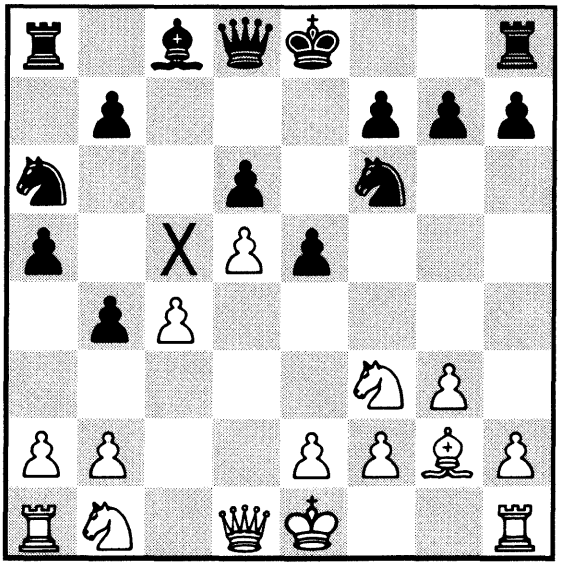
1) After **4.Bd2** Black can play in simple fashion with **4...Bxd2+ 5.Qxd2 d5**, when we get a *Queen's Gambit Declined* with the dark-squared Bishops traded off. This tends to be slightly better for White due to his advantage in space and the fact that Black's remaining Bishop is inferior to White's. However, Black's position is very solid and some defensive players feel quite comfortable playing in this fashion. The Black strategy is based on the fact that a cramped position is often eased by the exchange of a few pieces. This forms the justification of 4...Bxd2+.

For those looking for a richer game than the immediate exchange offers, Black has the luxury of choosing among three very interesting possibilities:

1.a) **4...a5** hopes for 5.Bxb4? axb4 when the a-file is opened for Black's Rook and the c3-square has been taken from White's Knight. If White doesn't take on b4, Black will castle and grab a bit of the center by ...d7-d5 with an interesting game in store.

1.b) **4...c5!?** (once a favorite of Russian Grandmaster Victor Korchnoi) nips at the White center and anticipates **5.Bxb4 cxb4** when, once again, the c3-square is taken from the White Knight. An intense fight then begins between White's superior pawn structure (and central preponderance of pawns) versus Black's goal of grabbing the c5-square with ...0-0, ...d6, and ...Qe7 followed by ...e5 when a d4-d5 advance by White allows Black to place a horse on the newly created home at c5 via ...Nb8-d7-c5 or ...Nb8-a6-c5 (see diagram 14). Of course, White shouldn't give this square up without a fight!

(14)



(Black conquers the c5-square)

1.c) **4...Qe7** is Black's most popular choice. This move defends the Bishop and places the Queen on a

flexible square. The main line goes as follows: **5.g3 Nc6 6.Bg2 Bxd2+** This forces White to recapture with the Knight since 7.Qxd2 Ne4 8.Qc2 Qb4+ is unpleasant. **7.Nbxd2 d6 8.e4 e5 9.d5 Nb8** when White's advantage in space is counterbalanced by Black's superior Bishop and control of the c5-square (Black will play to own this square with ...a5 followed by ...Nb8-d7-c5).

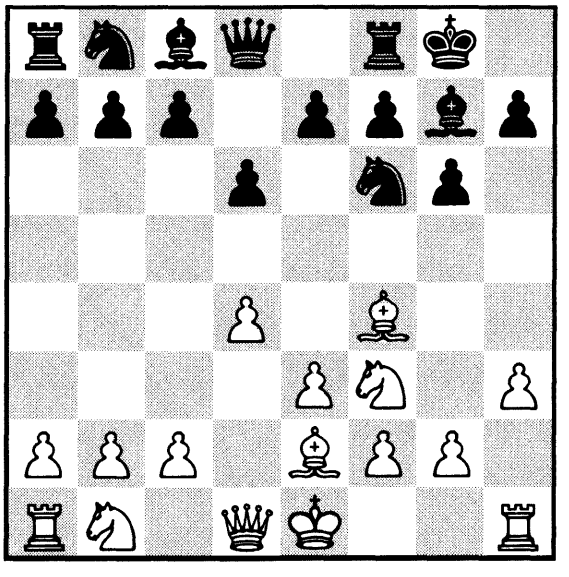
2) **4.Nbd2** plays to gain the two Bishops. Black's most common replies are **4...d5 5.e3 0-0 6.a3 Be7**, retaining the Bishop but allowing White to expand on the queenside with **7.b4** (though 7...a5 8.b5 c5 leads to a sharp position with chances for both sides), and **4...b6 5.a3 Bxd2+ 6.Bxd2 Bb7** when Black's control over the e4-square gives him compensation for the loss of the Bishop pair.

Boring Opening (Reversed London System)

This line is an excellent way for amateurs (who have limited study time) to meet Black's *King's Indian Defense.* Easy to learn, it is also solid and aggressive at the same time.

The first moves go as follows: **1.d4 Nf6 2.Nf3 g6 3.Bf4 Bg7 4.e3** White will answer ...Nh5 with Be5. As soon as Black stops this possibility with ...d7-d6, White will give his Bishop a safe place to run by h2-h3. **4...0-0 5.Be2** The correct place for this Bishop. The seemingly more aggressive 5.Bd3 will eventually run into problems after Black plays ...d7-d6 and ...e7-e5 when a later e5-e4 threatens to fork White's d3-Bishop and f3-Knight. This fork won't exist if you keep your Bishop on e2. **5...d6** Threatening to hunt White's Bishop down by ...Nh5. **6.h3** (see diagram 15) when Black will play for a share of the center with either c7-c5 or ...e7-e5. White would also like to grab some central squares with c2-c4 followed by Nc3.

(15)



(A "boring system" that restricts enemy counterplay)

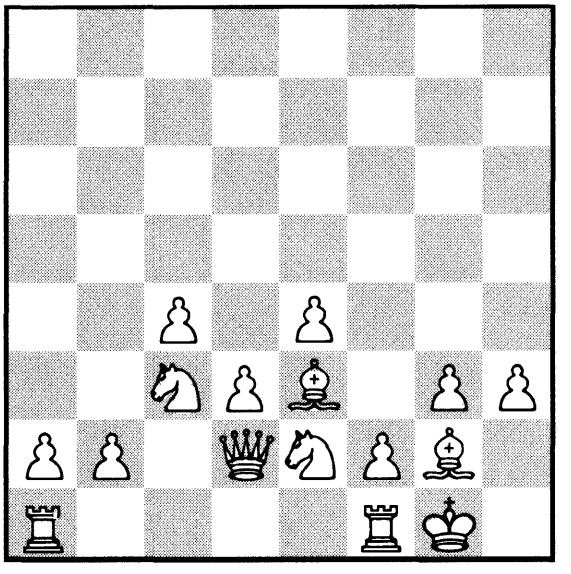
Here is a small sample of White's correct play against both Black plans:

Botvinnik Formation

Originally popularized by the great Russian World Champion Mikhail Botvinnik, this setup has become popular in the amateur ranks as an easy to understand system against almost anything.

White's goal (Black can also make use of this setup against several openings) is to place his pawns on e4 and c4, his Knights on c3 and e2, and his Bishop on g2. The diagram shows White's game with his development complete.

(16)



(A completed *Botvinnik Formation*)

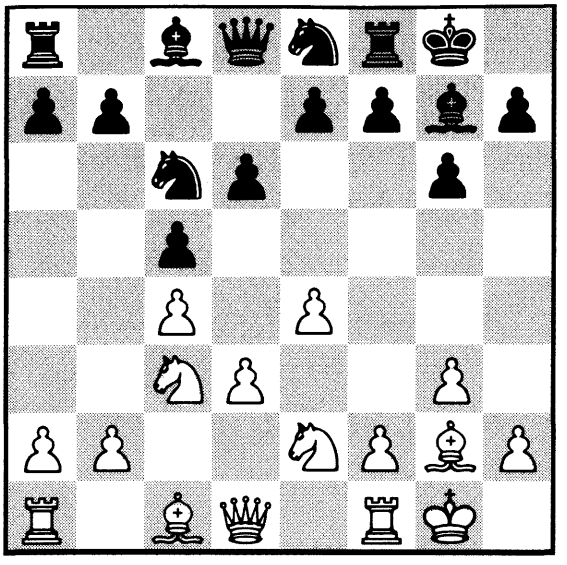
White's control over d5, mixed with possibilities of queenside expansion by b2-b4-b5 and kingside expansion by f2-f4-f5, make an appealing picture. The one flaw is the weakness of the d4-square, and Black should arrange his pieces to take advantage of that fact.

The following move orders show how this formation is achieved from both sides of the board:

1) **1.c4 c5 2.Nc3 Nc6 3.g3 g6 4.Bg2 Bg7 5.e4 Nf6 6.Nge2** White never wants to place his Knight on f3 while adopting this system. On e2 the Knight is immune from a ...Bg4 pin since f2-f3 blocks the Bishop. Placing the Knight on e2 also keeps the f-pawn free, allowing kingside

expansion by f2-f4-f5. **6...0-0 7.0-0 d6 8.d3 Ne8!**

(17)



(The horse heads for greener pastures)

This is an important idea for Black: this Knight was no longer doing much on f6 so it heads for d4 via ...Nf6-e8-c7-e6-d4. This maneuver also frees the Black f-pawn and allows the second player to answer f4 with ...f5. Play might continue: **9.Be3 Nd4** (stopping d3-d4) **10.Qd2 Nc7 11.f4 f5** when 12...Ne6 will give Black solid control over d4 and, as a result, a good game.

2) **1.e4 c5 2.c4** Some amateurs like to initiate the *Botvinnik Formation* with this move order. **2...Nc6 3.Nc3 g6 4.g3 Bg7 5.Bg2 e6** In our previous example Black placed his Knight on f6. Here we see a slightly different idea: placing the Black pawn on e6 and the Knight on e7 gives Black control over both d5 and f5 and also lets the Knight reach d4 after ...Nc6-d4 followed by ...Ne7-c6. Black achieves a perfectly satisfactory position after **6.Nge2 Nge7 7.0-0 0-0 8.d3 d6 9.Be3 Nd4 10.Qd2 Nec6** followed by queenside expansion with ...Rb8, ...a7-a6 and ...b7-b5.

3) Here is one example of Black using this formation: **1.c4 c5 2.Nc3 Nc6 3.g3 g6 4.Bg2 Bg7 5.Nf3 e5 6.d3 Nge7** with play that is identical to the plans seen in numbers one and two.

1) Black plays for queenside space with ...c7-c5: **6...c5 7.0-0** and now we will look at two Black ideas:

1.a) **7...Qb6** Trying to pinpoint b2 as a weakness. **8.Nbd2! Qxb2?** Bad, but the quiet 8...Nbd7 9.Nc4 Qc7 10.a4! creates an artificial support point on c4 by stopping Black's ...b7-b5. Note that a later ...d6-d5 will chase the Knight away from c4, but then the e5-square becomes vulnerable to invasion. Black's best move was probably 8...Be6. **9.Nc4 Qb4** Black's Queen is running out of squares. White is much better after 9...Qb5 10.Nxd6 while 9...Qc3 10.Rb1 followed by Rb3 forces the win of material. **10.c3! Qxc3 11.Rc1 Qb4 12.Rb1 Qc3 13.Rb3** and Black loses his Queen.

1.b) **7...Nc6** Placing pressure on d4, but this backfires horribly. **8.d5! Nb4 9.Nc3** Now White threatens to take complete control of the center with e4, Qd2, Rfe1, Rad1, Bf1, with an eventual e4-e5 in the air. This plan of central expansion is one of White's dreams, and Black may try to prevent it with the aggressive looking **9...Bf5** Unfortunately, this attack fails to **10.a3!** when **10...Na6 11.Nd2** followed by 12.e4 favors White and 10...Nxc2 11.Rc1 wins material since the Knight on c2 is trapped.

2) Black plays for ...e7-e5: **6...Nbd7 7.0-0 Re8 8.c4** The passive 8.c3 followed by Nbd2 is also playable, but why not grab all the space you can? **8...c6** Not falling for 8...e5? 9.dxe5 dxe5 10.Nxe5! Nxe5 11.Qxd8 Rxd8 12.Bxe5 when White has won a pawn. **9.Nc3 Qc7 10.b4 e5 11.Bh2** Many players feel that 11.dxe5 exchanges the good d-pawn for Black's good e-pawn. This is an incorrect view of the position, however, since White is really trading off his fine d-pawn for Black's poor d-pawn after 11...dxe5. White almost never wants to take on e5, and will only do so if it brings him some sort of immediate gain. **11...e4** Not good, but White's threat of c4-c5 al-

ready promised him a huge advantage. **12.Nd2** and suddenly the h2-Bishop has turned into a monster. The threat of 13.c5 followed by Nc4 places Black in a horrible situation.

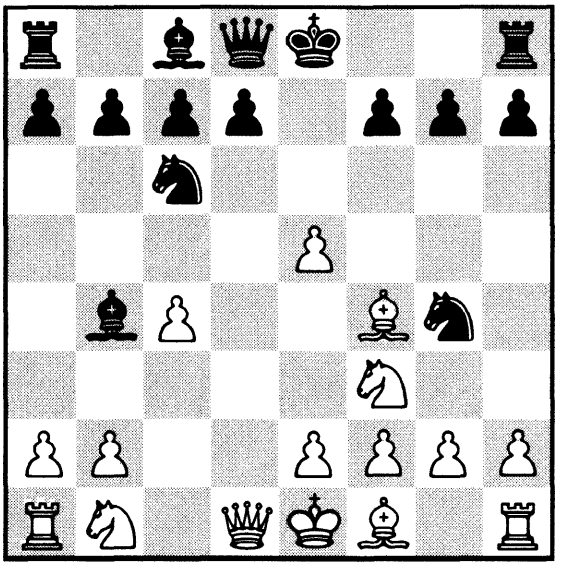
This system was named the *Boring Opening* by a player who realized that White is actually keeping enemy counterplay to a minimum, thus boring his opponent to death.

Budapest Gambit

This gambit has become increasingly popular during the last decade, and players of all strengths seem to enjoy playing it from time to time. After **1.d4 Nf6 2.c4** Black strikes a blow in the center and frees his pieces by **2...e5!? 3.dxe5 Ng4** (the speculative 3...Ne4 doesn't have a good reputation).

White has many ways to continue, but the most popular method is **4.Bf4 Nc6 5.Nf3 Bb4+** when White must choose between two very different ideas:

(18)



(Main line position of the *Budapest*)

1) **6.Nbd2** intends to give the pawn back in return for the two Bishops and a slight (but safe) positional plus. This line runs as follows: **6...Qe7 7.a3 Ngxe5** Threatening ...Nd3 mate! **8.Nxe5 Nxe5 9.e3 Bxd2+ 10.Qxd2** when White's game is preferable, but Black has chances for eventual equality.

2) **6.Nc3** holds onto the pawn but gives Black real compensation in the form of active pieces and a superior pawn structure: **6...Bxc3+** Putting this off by 6...Qe7? is now known to favor White due to 7.Qb3! **7.bxc3 Qe7**

8.Qd5 f6 9.exf6 Nxf6 10.Qd3 d6 I must admit that this author prefers White's chances (after 11 g3!) due to his two Bishops, extra pawn (it's not pretty but it's mine!), and the possibility of a timely Nd4 However, many players seem quite happy with Black's game (the second player, after castling, can put tremendous pressure on the c4-pawn by Na5 followed by Be6 The c5-square can also become a nice home for a Black Knight after Nf6-e4-c5), and this philosophical argument explains why the *Budapest Gambit* has remained fairly popular

Caro-Kann Defense

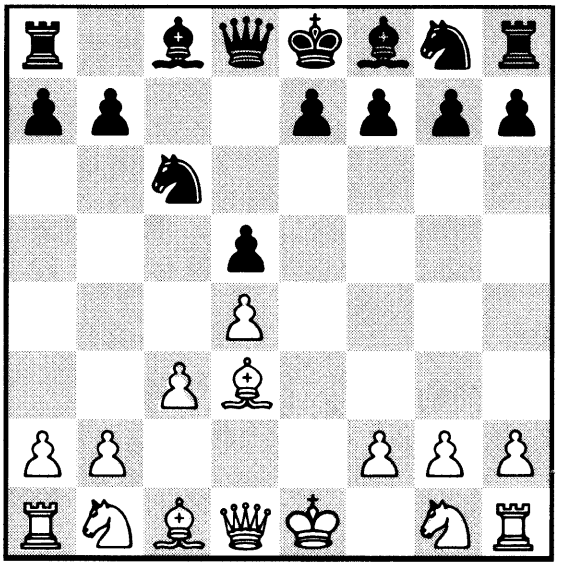
While the *Caro-Kann* (**1.e4 c6 2.d4 d5**) and the *French Defense* (1 e4 e6 2 d4 d5) both strive to gain a central foothold with a defended d5-pawn, the *Caro* leads to calmer positions than its French brother On the positive side, the move c6 (instead of e6) keeps the c8-h3 diagonal open for Black's light-squared Bishop The negative side of this opening revolves around the fact that c7-c5 is still an important source of counterplay and, as compared to the *French*, Black has already moved this pawn and lost a tempo as a result

This slight loss of time in playing c7-c6 followed by a later c6-c5 means that Black will try to slow the play down He will only make use of the c5 advance when most of his army is developed (in the *French*, the closed pawn center enables him to play ...c7-c5 much faster).

The typical pawn structures resulting from this opening are:

1) White exchanges on d5 and then places his c-pawn on c3 (via **3.exd5 cxd5 4.Bd3 Nc6 5.c3**).

(19)



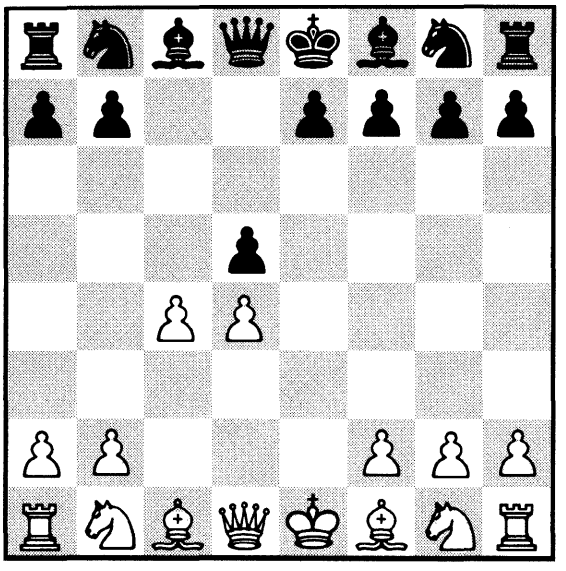
(This firm center prepares for play on the wings)

In this position, White will seek play on the kingside (that is the direction his pawns point to) while Black will

seek queenside play by making use of a MINORITY ATTACK (for a discussion of this plan see Minority Attack, page 202)

2) White exchanges on d5 and then places his c-pawn on c4 (via **3.exd5 cxd5 4.c4** This is known as the *Panov-Botvinnik Attack)*

(20)



(A high tension center)

This sharp system places immediate pressure on Black's central d5-pawn. Black will support this point with ...Nf6 and e6, making sure to avoid the early development of his light-squared Bishop Why? Because this piece needs to keep an eye on the b7-pawn Forgetting about this rule by 4 Nf6 5 Nc3 Bf5 leads to unpleasant repercussions after 6 Qb3, with a double attack against both b7 and d5

Usually Black will take the pawn on c4 (dxc4) only after White moves his light-squared Bishop This forces the Bishop to move a second time and gains a tempo

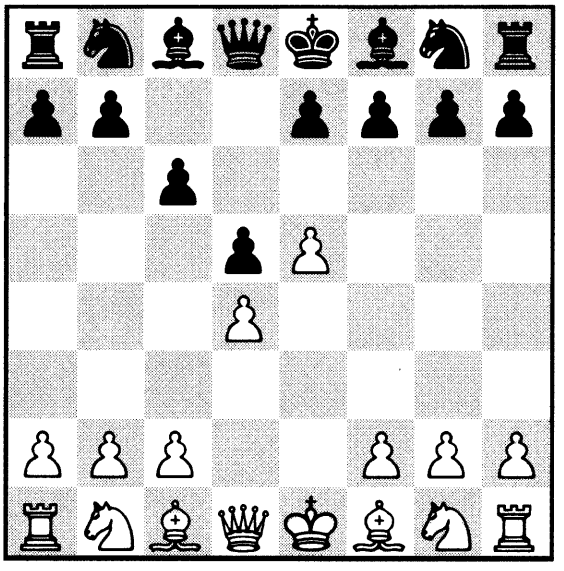
The resulting isolated d-pawn position gives White chances against Black's King in exchange for Black's long-range prospects against the potentially weak d4-pawn

Common moves are **4...Nf6 5.Nc3 e6 6.Nf3 Be7 7.cxd5** On 7 Bd3, Black would force the Bishop to move again by 7 dxc4 **7...Nxd5 8.Bd3 0-0 9.0-0 Nc6** Black

will play to control the important d5-square by a later ...b6 and ...Bb7. His forces would then stand well but White's dynamic potential, notwithstanding the static weakness of d4, tends to make the first player's position somewhat more promising. For a more detailed discussion of the correct plans associated with Isolated Pawns, turn to that topic in the Middlegame section (page 241).

3) White advances his pawn to e5 (**3.e5**), leading to typical *French* type formations.

(21)



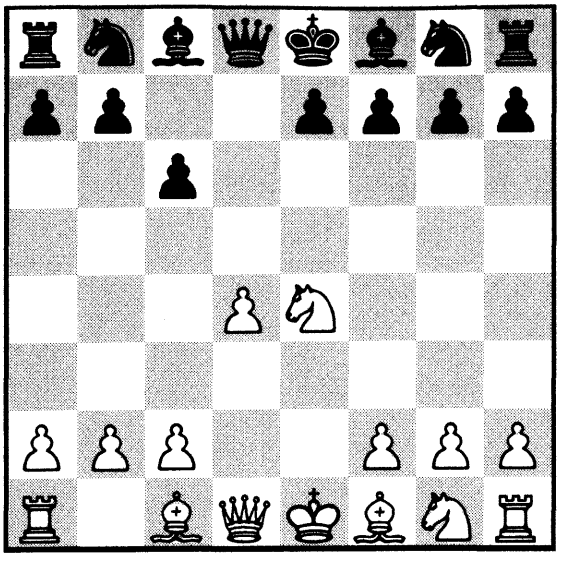
(*French* formation with freed light-squared Bishop)

White seeks a firm center and the spatial plus that it bestows. He may also play for kingside pressure, thanks to the presence of his e5-pawn.

Black will get his Bishop outside the pawn chain by ...Bf5 or ...Bg4 followed by ...e7-e6. He may then play for an immediate ...c6-c5 advance, or he might prepare for it first by ...Ne7, ...Nd7, ...Qb6 and only then ...c6-c5.

4) White defends the e-pawn with his Knight (via either 3.Nc3 or 3.Nd2). After **3.Nc3 dxe4 4.Nxe4** we get a position (see diagram 22) which offers adequate play to Black due to his ability to get his Bishop outside the pawn chain (Black will often strive to bring his Bishop to f5 or g4 before playing ...e7-e6).

(22)

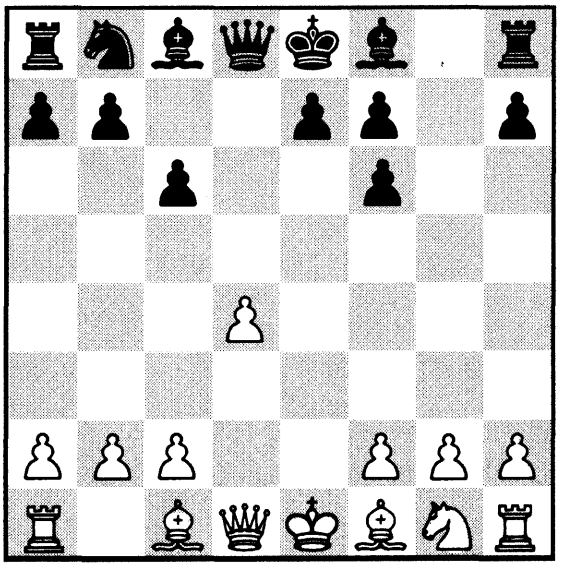


(Main line *Caro-Kann* position)

White will try to make use of his central space, while Black must choose from three different setups:

4.a) He can play for an imbalanced pawn structure with **4...Nf6 5.Nxf6+ gxf6** (known as the *Bronstein-Larsen Variation*) when his control over e5 and the possibility of placing a Rook on the g-file gives him compensation for the doubled pawns (see diagram 23). Recapturing with **5...exf6** is also playable, but offers far fewer dynamic possibilities.

(23)

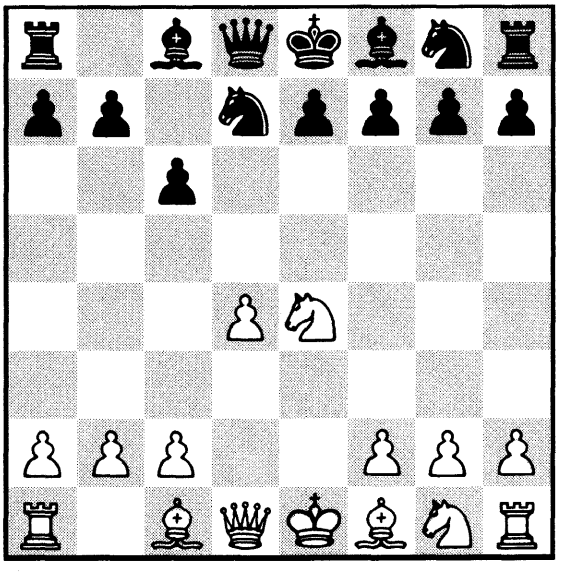


(*Bronstein-Larsen Variation*)

4.b) He can develop quietly with **4...Nbd7** (see diagram 24) followed by 5...Ngf6. This somewhat passive but highly popular system is favored by the British Grandmaster Johnathan Speelman and the Russian former World Champion Anatoly Karpov.

Black hopes to develop his pieces in a quiet manner (after 4...Nbd7 and 5...Ngf6) with ...e6, ...Be7, ...0-0 when an eventual ...c6-c5 will free his game. White will try to make use of his spatial superiority in one of the following ways: 1) he will create attacking chances against Black's King by castling queenside and advancing his kingside pawns; or 2) he will play a fairly quiet game by castling kingside and bringing his Rooks to the center.

(24)



(Karpov's favorite system)

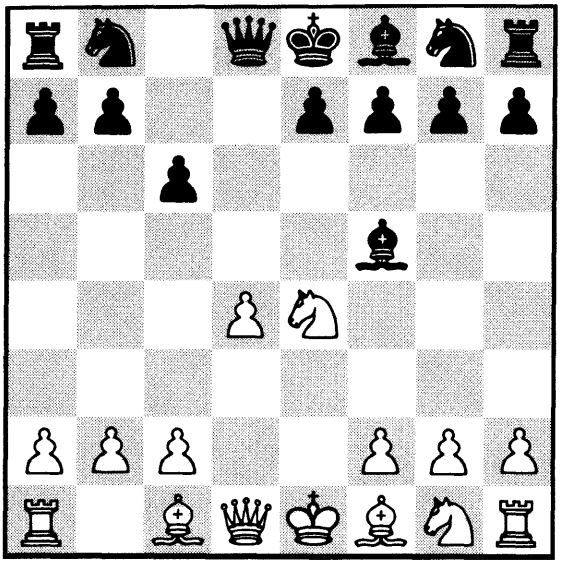
4.c) He can develop in a clear and logical manner with **4...Bf5** (see diagram 25) followed by ...e6, ...Nf6, and ...Nbd7 (a further ...Qc7, ...Bd6 and ...0-0-0 is also common). As usual, Black's counterplay will come from a well-timed ...c6-c5 advance.

White will probably castle long (though castling short is also possible) and try to restrain Black's activity by clamping down on the e5-square (which

will become a nice home for a White Knight) and by placing his Rooks in the middle.

American Grandmaster Yasser Seirawan has always been fond of this classical main line.

(25)



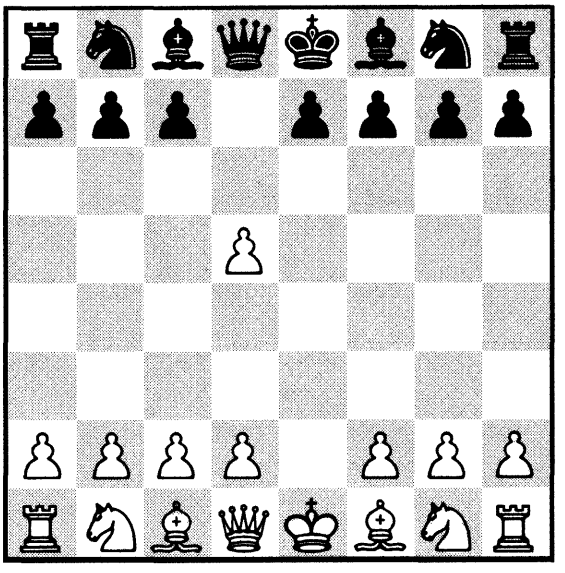
(*Classical System*)

Center-Counter Defense

This opening has never enjoyed a good reputation but, strangely enough, it has been used by World Champions Capablanca and Alekhine, and more recently by Grandmasters Larsen, Rogers and Anand.

By striking at White's e-pawn immediately (**1.e4 d5**), Black refuses to waste time with such preparatory moves as 1...e6 or 1...c6. The problem with the opening is that Black will lose some time anyway in recapturing on d5 with his Queen or Knight. After **2.exd5** Black has two ways to play.

(26)



(How should Black regain his pawn?)

1) The main line *Center-Counter* calls for **2...Qxd5** when White gains some initiative with **3.Nc3** Gaining a tempo by attacking the Black Queen. **3...Qa5 4.d4** Though White's position makes a nice impression (more central space), Black can get a solid game by **4...Nf6 5.Nf3 Bf5** followed by 6...e6 and ...c6, ...Nbd7, ...Qc7, ...Bd6 etc. (note the similarities to the *Caro-Kann*).

2) For those who don't like bringing their Queen out too early, the *Scandinavian Defense* (**2...Nf6**) is a serious

option. Play tends to be sharper here than in the normal *Center Counter*, and the Black Knight will usually find itself getting kicked around by White's center pawns (in the style of *Alekhine's Defense*): **3.d4** Taking control of the center with his pawns. Also possible is the interesting 3.Bb5+!?, while 3.c4 c6 4.dxc6? Nxc6 gives Black too much central control and development. Better, after 3.c4 c6, is 4.d4 cxd5 with a transposition to the *Panov-Botvinnik Attack* in the *Caro-Kann Defense*. **3...Nxd5** and now **4.c4 Nb6** leads to sharp play where Black will strive for pressure against White's center, while **4.Nf3** holds off on c2-c4 for a little while, instead opting for calm development via Be2 and 0-0. Black chances must not be underestimated, but White's center pawns can choke the life out of the second player if he doesn't proceed in an accurate manner.

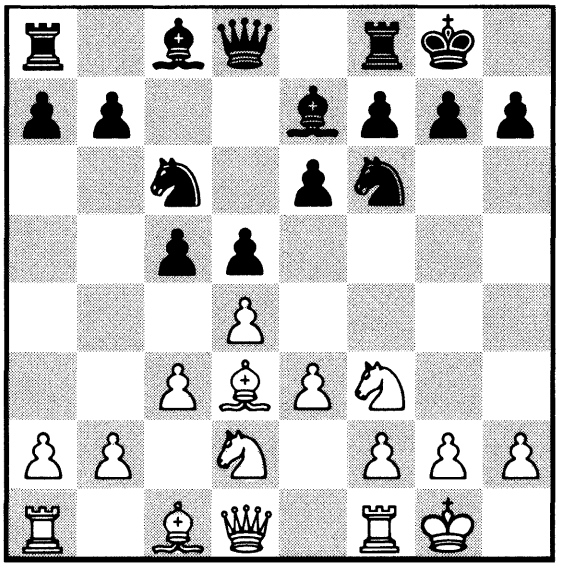
Colle Opening

Perhaps the most popular amateur opening, the *Colle* (named after the Belgian Champion Edgard Colle, not the dog!) starts solidly (using easy to remember, to-the-point moves) with the intention of turning aggressive once White's King is safely castled.

After **1.d4 d5 2.Nf3 Nf6 3.e3** White intends to play for e3-e4 (which frees the Bishop on c1) by placing his pieces on posts that control that square.

One typical sequence is: **3...e6 4.Bd3 c5 5.c3 Nc6 6.Nbd2** Now White's d3-Bishop and d2-Knight have taken aim at e4. **6...Be7 7.0-0 0-0** when, now that White is castled, the first player is ready to play directly for his central advance.

(27)



(The *Colle Opening*)

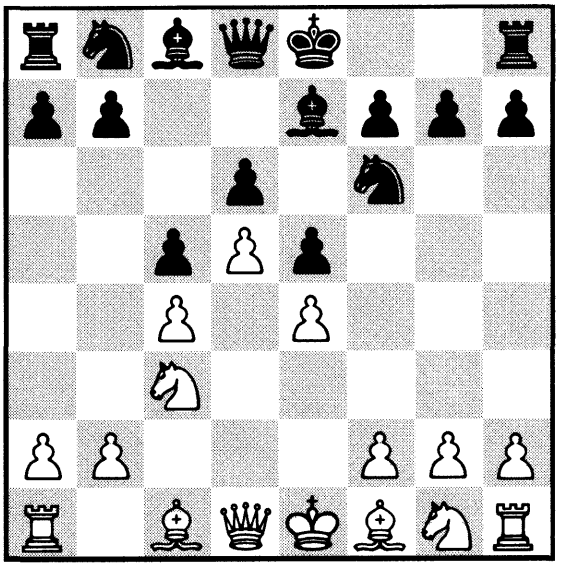
Play might proceed: **8.Qe2 Qc7** Black is threatening to beat White to the punch with ...e6-e5. **9.dxc5 Bxc5 10.e4**. Now White's pieces are all aimed at the Black King, e4-e5 is threatened (e.g., 10...Bd7? 11.e5 Ng4 12.Bxh7+! Kxh7 13.Ng5+ followed by 14.Qxg4), and **10...dxe4 11.Nxe4** frees the Bishop on c1 (the subtle reply 10...h6! is Black's best answer to 10.e4, since 11.e5? Ng4 leads to the loss of a pawn because Bxh7+ is no longer available to White).

Since the *Colle* is not very effective against the *King's Indian Defense* (1.d4 Nf6 2.Nf3 g6), many players combine this system (to be used against 1.d4 Nf6 2.Nf3 d5) with the *Boring Opening* (after 1.d4 Nf6 2.Nf3 g6 3.Bf4).

Czech Benoni

This interesting opening leads to closed positions that should prove instructive for either side to play. The position after **1.d4 Nf6 2.c4 c5 3.d5 e5 4.Nc3 d6 5.e4 Be7** allows for a minimum of plans for both sides:

(28)



(Closed *Czech Benoni* center)

White may play for queenside space via b2-b4 or for kingside space via f2-f4 (though this latter plan can easily leave Black in charge of the e5-square after ...exf4 followed by ...Nb8-d7-e5).

Black must try the same ideas with ...b7-b5 or ...f7-f5 (both sides are following the rule that you should play to open lines and gain space with your pawns on the wings when the center is completely closed).

One typical sequence is **6.Bd3** Also popular is 6.g3 followed by 7.Bg2. **6...0-0 7.Nge2 Ne8** Development is not very important when the center is closed. **8.0-0** when Black can chose between **8...g6** (preparing ...f7-f5 and intending to answer 9.Bh6 with 9...Ng7) and **8...Bg5!**, trading the bad Bishop for White's good one on c1.

Dutch Defense

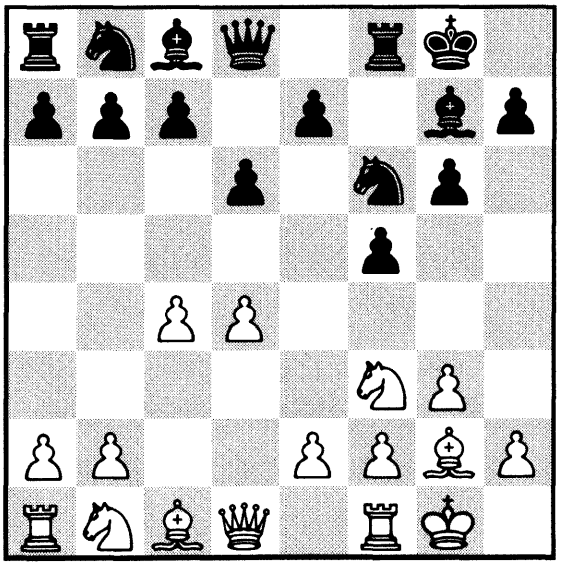
Black's first move (**1.d4 f5**) make his initial intentions clear: he will try hard to gain control over the key e4-square. Other ideas are an eventual ...e7-e5 advance and possible kingside play based on the space his...f7-f5 gained in that sector.

White will counter Black's plans by playing for queenside space and/or by playing for an e2-e4 advance. This latter idea is critical because the opening of the e-file might easily lead to the unveiling of central weaknesses created by ...f7-f5.

Main lines run as follows: **2.g3** Also interesting is 2.Nc3, intending an immediate e2-e4. **2...Nf6 3.Bg2** and now Black usually chooses between the *Leningrad Variation* (**3...g6 4.Nf3 Bg7 5.0-0 0-0 6.c4 d6** with the idea of achieving the ...e7-e5 advance) and the *Stonewall Variation* (**3...e6 4.Nf3 d5 5.0-0 Bd6 6.c4 c6 7.b3 Qe7**, playing for a firm hold on the e4-square and a solid central position).

Of course, both these systems have drawbacks. The *Leningrad Variation* creates a weakness on e6 (see diagram 29). White can try to exploit this by playing for e2-e4 (via Nc3 followed by Qc2 and e4), when the open e-file would make e6 stick out like a sore thumb. Aside from this direct central advance (which may not be so easy to achieve), White can also hit at e6 by d4-d5 followed by Nd4.

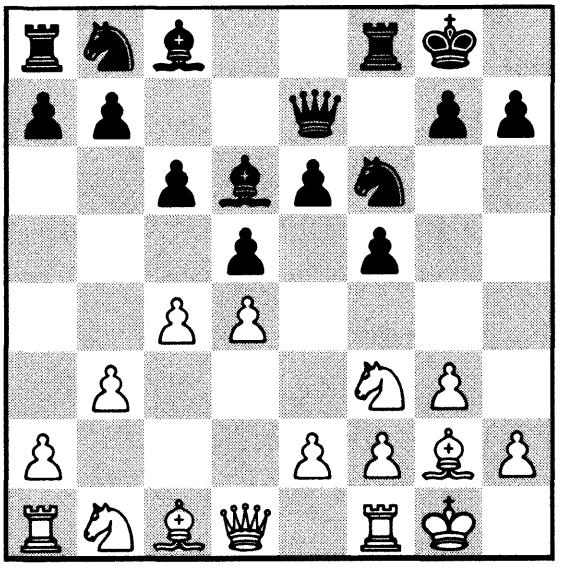
(29)



(The e6-square may become weak)

The *Stonewall Variation*'s Achilles-heel is the hole on e5, which White will try to dominate by Nbd2, Bb2, Nf3-e5-d3 (this frees the f-pawn) and now an e2-e4 advance by f2-f3 followed by e4 might prove strong (White can also play for queenside space via c4-c5 followed by b2-b4).

(30)

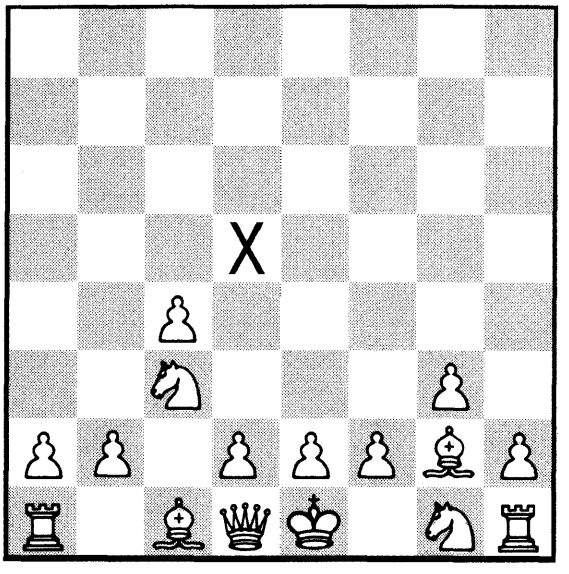


(A hole exists on e5)

English Opening

This positional weapon has been used, at one time or another, by most of the world's strongest Grandmasters. With **1.c4** White lays claim to the important d5-square. He will back this up with Nc3 (developing and aiming another piece at d5), g2-g3 and Bg2 (yet another unit strikes at the big square).

(31)



(Laying claim to the d5-square)

Black has many ways to combat this opening, but we will only take a quick look at the two most principled replies:

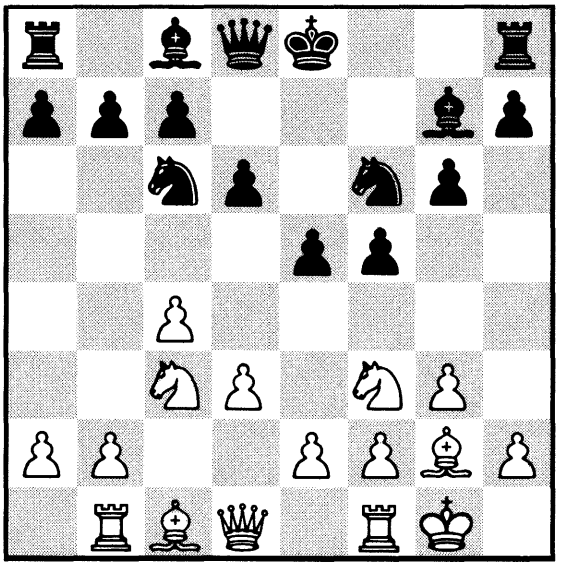
1) **1...c5** is clearly a sound answer. Black ignores White's lust for d5 and makes his own overtures towards the d4-square. Both sides can then follow one of two basic plans:

   1.a) White can try for a central space advantage with d2-d4, while Black can try to make use of the same idea with ...d7-d5 (one well known line goes as follows: **2.Nc3 Nc6 3.g3 g6 4.Bg2 Bg7 5.Nf3 Nf6 6.d4 cxd4 7.Nxd4 Nxd4 8.Qxd4** when White owns a bit of extra space in the center).

1.b) Both sides can play for queenside space with b2-b4 or ...b7-b5 (a boring but typical sequence would be: **2.Nc3 Nc6 3.g3 g6 4.Bg2 Bg7 5.a3 a6 6.Rb1 Rb8 7.b4 cxb4 8.axb4 b5 9.cxb5 axb5**).

2) **1...e5** is, in effect, a reversed *Sicilian.* With this move Black hits the d4-square and takes more space on the kingside. This can easily lead to a position where White plays for a queenside attack while Black strikes out against the enemy King: **2.Nc3 Nc6 3.g3 g6 4.Bg2 Bg7 5.Nf3 d6 6.d3 f5 7.0-0 Nf6** when White will expand on the queenside with **8.Rb1** followed by b2-b4-b5 (see diagram 32). This loosens up the g2-a8 diagonal for the g2-Bishop, gains space, and chases the Black Knight away from c6.

(32)



(White prepares queenside expansion with the mysterious Rb1)

Note that White prepares b2-b4 with Rb1 instead of a3. Why? The tactical reason is that b2-b4 loosens up the g7-a1 diagonal and places the Rook in danger from Black's g7-Bishop. Placing the Rook on b1 avoids this danger before it becomes real.

The positional reason is that placing the b-pawn on b5 (via b2-b4-b5) hopes for Black to eventually play ...c7-c6 (for example, this might be necessary to chase a White Knight away

from d5). Then bxc6 would open the b-file and make White look like a genius for placing his Rook on that file in the first place!

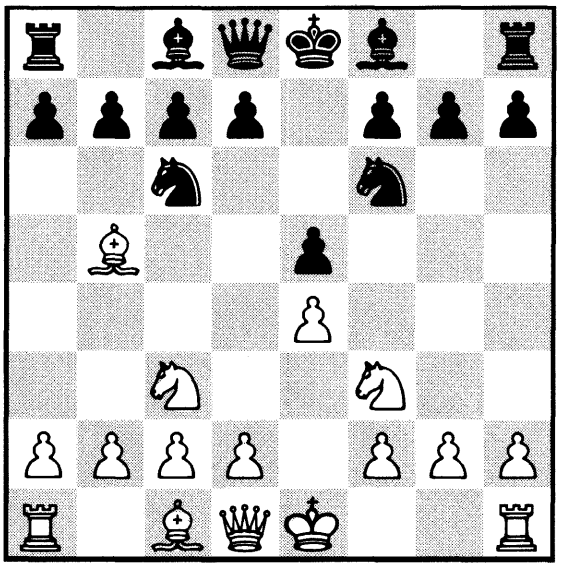
Naturally, Black will answer his opponent's queenside demonstration with an attack against the White King via ...0-0, ...h7-h6 (keeping a White Knight off of g5), ...Be6, ...Qd7, ...f5-f4, ...Bh3, etc. The sharp game that results will offer both sides chances of success.

Four Knights Opening

The *Four Knights Opening* has been around for over four hundred years. Positional in nature, White seeks simple development before embarking on any adventures.

The main line of the *Four Knights* comes about after **1.e4 e5 2.Nf3 Nc6 3.Nc3 Nc6 4.Bb5** when Black usually chooses between two continuations:

(33)

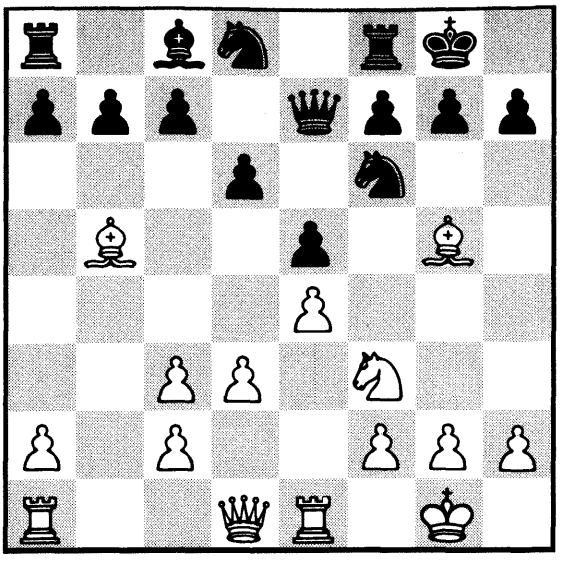


(The *Four Knights Opening*)

1) Black keeps playing in a symmetrical vein by **4...Bb4**. The key structure comes about after **5.0-0 0-0 6.d3 d6 7.Bg5 Bxc3 8.bxc3**. White enjoys two Bishops (which may or may not turn out to be an advantage) and has some pressure thanks to the unpleasant pin against the f6-Knight.

   Since 8...h6 9.Bh4 g5 leaves too many weaknesses in Black's kingside, the best way to break the g5-d8 pin is **8...Qe7 9.Re1 Nd8** followed by 10...Ne6 (known as the *Metger Unpin*. See diagram 34).

(34)



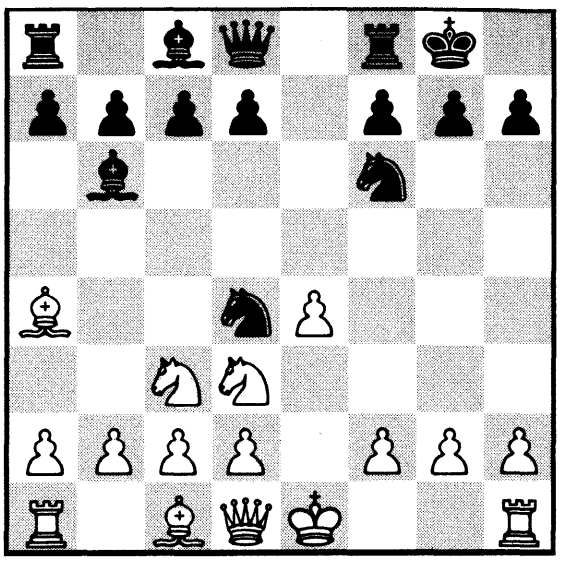
(*Metger's Unpin.* Black's Knight is heading for e6)

The game now revolves around the following questions: What will prove stronger, the White Bishops or the Black Knights? Can Black keep the center blocked (a blocked center snuffs out the strength of Bishops)?

A very important point is that Black must guard the e5-pawn for all he's worth. When White plays d3-d4, Black must never exchange by ...exd4 since the resultant fluid center would turn the White Bishops into winning monsters (an eventual e4-e5 would crack the center completely open)!

2) Black makes use of Rubinstein's sharp **4...Nd4!?**. The intention is to sacrifice a pawn in exchange for a lead in development and very active pieces. The best moves are acknowledged to be **5.Ba4 Bc5** Hebden's 5...c6!? is also playable. **6.Nxe5 0-0 7.Nd3 Bb6** when the active Black position (and the fact that White's queenside pieces are entombed by the Knight on d3 which blocks the d-pawn) has led to good practical and theoretical results for the second player (see diagram 35).

(35)



(Key position for *Rubinstein Variation, Four Knights Opening*)

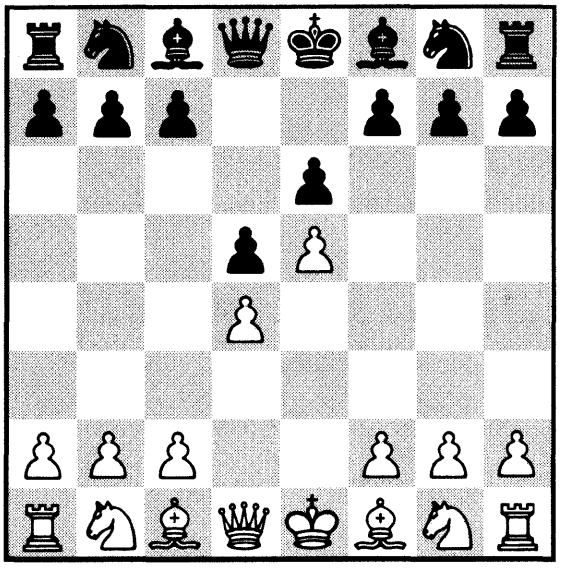
The French Defense

This fighting opening (**1.e4 e6 2.d4 d5**) locks in the c8-Bishop and cedes White central space. Black is willing to make these concessions in exchange for a solid central pawn chain (his pawn on e6 defends the pawn on d5) and the possibility of central and queenside counterplay by ...c7-c5.

The two structures that occur are:

1) White has pawns on d4 and e5, Black has pawns on d5 and e6 (this can appear after **3.e5** or after **3.Nc3 Nf6 4.e5** or after **3.Nd2 Nf6 4.e5**).

(36)



(Typical *French* center)

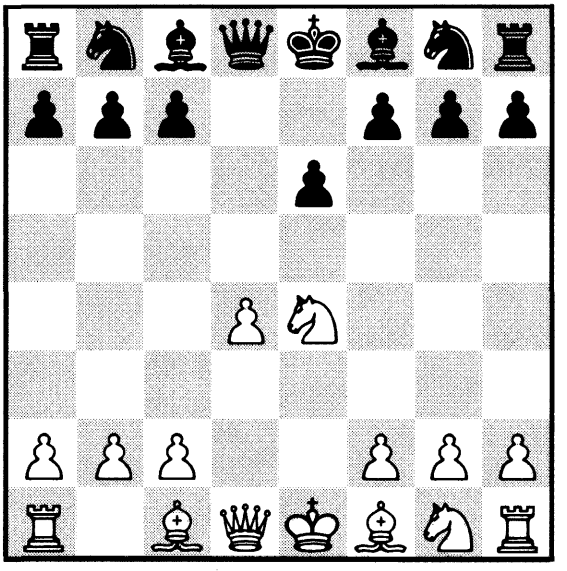
A closed pawn center (as in diagram 36) usually calls for play on the wings. In this case Black's pawns point towards the queenside while White's are aiming at the kingside. However, Black, who will most definitely take control of some extra queenside territory, can also strike at White's center by ...c7-c5 and/or ...f7-f6.

White's play often comes from kingside piece play via Qg4, Bd3, h2-h4, etc. An effective alternative, though, is to seek a pawn break by f2-f4-f5.

The tough, gritty positions that come from this opening are not to everyone's taste Germany's Wolfgang Uhlmann was a lifelong *French* addict, and super Soviet Grandmasters Mikhail Botvinnik (who was World Champion for many years) and Victor Korchnoi also gained many fine victories with it

2) White has a pawn on d4 while Black has a pawn on e6 (the e4 and d5 pawns have been exchanged).

(37)



(Another common *French Defense* center)

This formation (diagram 37 comes about after **3.Nc3 dxe4 4.Nxe4**) is generally considered to be slightly more comfortable for White He possesses more space, can use the e5-square as a home for his Knight (via Ng1-f3-e5), and owns a good light-squared Bishop that can easily bother Black's kingside after an eventual Bd3

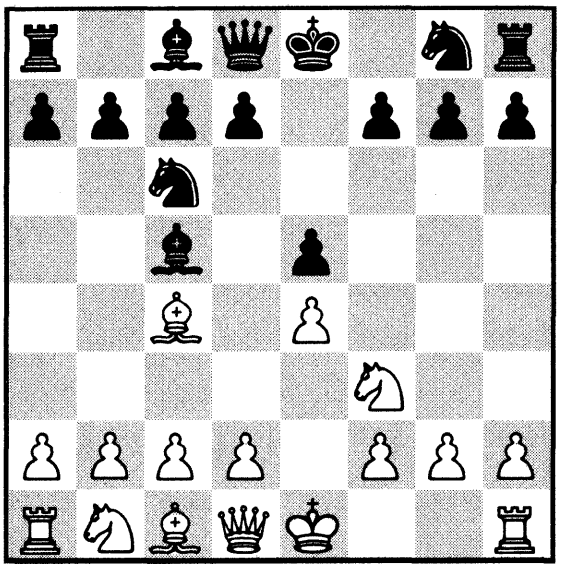
Black's counterplay rests in a timely c7-c5 advance White's d4-pawn, which rests on the half-open d-file, can also become a target if the first player grows careless The poor Black Bishop on c8 will usually come into play by b7-b6 followed by Ba6 (exchanging the light-squared Bishops is something that Black would love to do), by b7-b6 followed by Bb7 (the Bishop stands beautifully on the active b7-h1 diagonal), or by Bc8-d7-c6 when the Bishop once again has found happiness on the c6-h1 diagonal

The Giuoco Piano

Also known as the *Italian Game.* White logically places his Bishop on an active diagonal and eyes the vulnerable pawn on f7. This opening was very popular in the 1800s but better defensive techniques, and the advent of the more subtle *Ruy Lopez,* took away some of its luster.

After **1.e4 e5 2.Nf3 Nc6 3.Bc4 Bc5** White has three very different ways of handling the position:

(38)



(The *Giuoco Piano*)

1) **4.d3** leads to a quiet buildup. White continues slowly with 0-0, c2-c3, Nb1-d2, eventually hoping to expand in the center with d3-d4. This line doesn't put much pressure on Black, and simple development by ...Nf6, ...d6 and ...0-0 (Black is using the e5 strong-point strategy mentioned in the section on the *Ruy Lopez*) gives him a completely acceptable position.

2) **4.b4!?** leads to the exciting *Evans Gambit* (invented in the 1820s), a variation that was once the toast of Europe. White sacrifices a pawn to gain time and get his pieces out rapidly (after 4...Bxb4 5.c3 followed by d4 and, in many cases, Qb3).

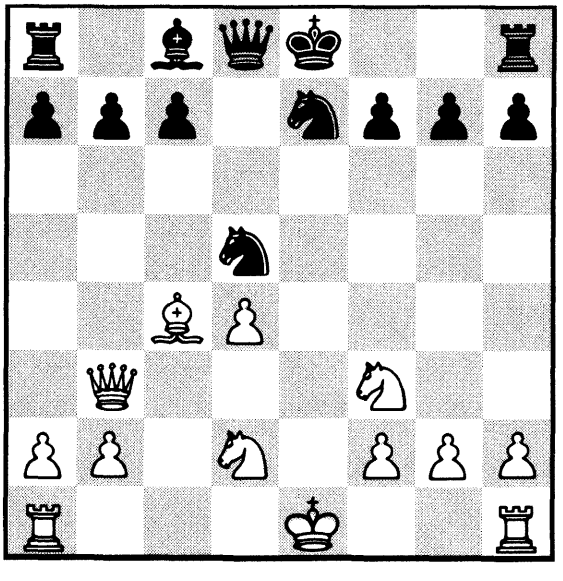
The Evans was considered to be good for White until World Champion Emanuel Lasker and other analysts came up with defenses that proved hard to crack. It was then thought to be rather dubious until Kasparov dusted if off and showed that it still contains a lot of life.

Naturally, playing a gambit carries a good deal of risk since the extra material gives the defender a long-term advantage. If Black can solidify his position, complete his development and get his King castled, White might find himself a pawn down and in desperate trouble. If Black tarries though, he can get blown off the board due to White's lead in development and active pieces.

3) **4.c3** leads to the main line. White takes control of the d4-square and prepares to grab the center with a d2-d4 advance. Black has to take active measures against this; indecisive play will allow White to carry out his plan, with all the spatial gains and perks that go along with a successful annexation of the center.

Best play is **4...Nf6** Striking at the White e-pawn. **5.d4 exd4 6.cxd4 Bb4+ 7.Bd2 Bxd2+ 8.Nbxd2 d5!** Destroying White's center before it becomes too threatening. **9.exd5 Nxd5 10.Qb3 Nce7** when White's more active pieces compensate for his isolated d-pawn (see diagram 39). Chances are considered to be about equal.

(39)

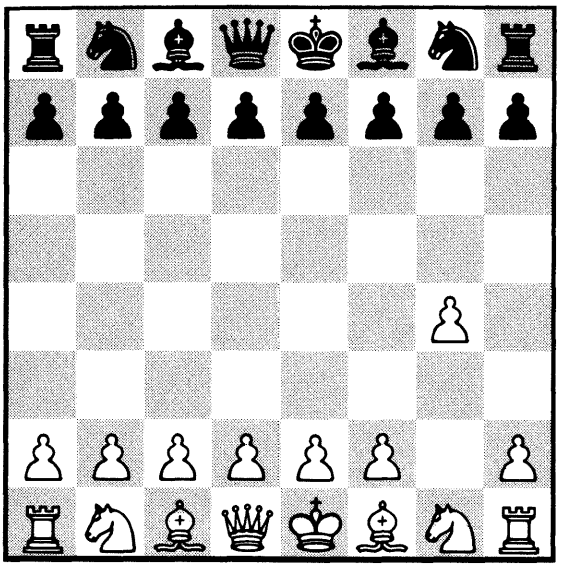


(*Giuoco Piano*: active pieces vs. better pawn structure)

The Grob

With the horrible looking **1.g4** (see diagram 40) White grabs kingside space and prepares to place his Bishop on the g2-a8 diagonal. The problem with the *Grob* is that White's kingside is weakened (the f4 and h4-squares can easily fall into enemy hands), his pawn thrust doesn't make any challenge for central squares and the need to defend g4 will cost White a bit of time.

(40)



(The strange *Grob Opening*)

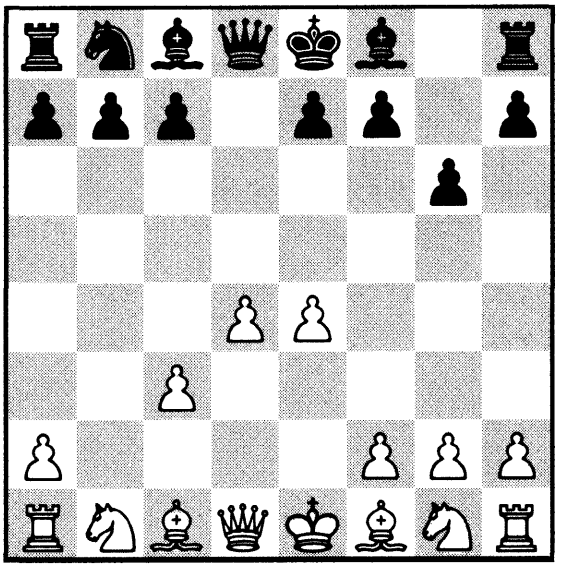
Though Black has many ways to answer this opening, the most popular is **1...d5**, bringing a pawn to the center and creating an immediate threat against g4. Then **2.h3** White can try 2.Bg2 but 2...c6 3.h3 transposes. **2...e5 3.Bg2 c6** hands the whole center over to Black.

When you're White, don't play this inferior opening. As Black, let out a cheer if your opponent pushes his g-pawn to g4!

The Grünfeld Defense

Introduced in 1922, this very modern opening challenges the age-old wisdom that a full pawn center is a valuable commodity. After **1.d4 Nf6 2.c4 g6 3.Nc3** Black actually dares White to build a seemingly overwhelming center with **3...d5 4.cxd5** Other tries include 4.Bg5, 4.Bf4 and 4.Nf3. **4...Nxd5 5.e4 Nxc3 6.bxc3**

(41)



(The *Grünfeld* laughs at White's huge pawn center!)

This position gives us a real battle of philosophies! White will give his center as much support as possible, since, if he can succeed in making it indestructible, Black will find himself without space and without counterplay.

In an effort to label White's center as a target, Black will hit the middle with everything he can throw at it. Black would also like to force a pawn advance by d4-d5 or e4-e5 when squares will suddenly make themselves available to the Black army (the pawns on e4 and d4 control all the key central squares. As soon as one of these pawns steps forward, White gains some more space but hands a square or a diagonal to his opponent).

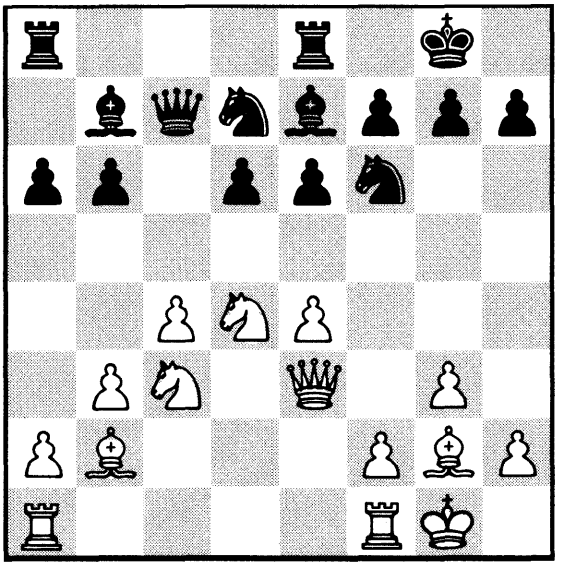
The following sequence gives an excellent illustration of the critical themes: **6...Bg7** Now Black has two pieces hitting d4. **7.Bc4** 7.Nf3 is a critical alternative. **7...0-0 8.Ne2** By placing the

Knight here instead of on f3, White is able to meet ...Bg4 with f3. **8...c5** A third unit joins in the central assault. **9.0-0 Nc6** Unit number four sets its sights on the morsel on d4. **10.Be3** White defends d4 and Black attacks it. The flow of this position is easy to understand **10...Qc7** This creates tactical threats against the c4-Bishop and simultaneously prepares to place the Rook on d8, where it will continue the fight against d4. **11.Rc1** A mysterious looking move that gives c4 some support since 11...cxd4 12.cxd4 brings the Rook into play. **11...Rd8 12.Qd2** and White will follow up with 13.Rfd1 when both players are still following the blueprint that was laid out much earlier: White's whole army is devoted to defending his center, Black's whole army is devoted to attacking it.

Hedgehog Formation

This seemingly passive formation can be used by Black against certain lines of the *English Opening* and even appears in some variations of the *Sicilian Defense*. I use the word "seemingly" because Black's position, though quiet in appearance, is actually bursting with pent-up energy!

(42)



(*Hedgehog Formation*)

The position in diagram 42 (reached after **1.c4 c5 2.Nf3 Nf6 3.Nc3 e6 4.g3 b6 5.Bg2 Bb7 6.0-0 Be7 7.d4 cxd4 8.Qxd4 d6 9.e4 a6 10.Qe3 0-0 11.Nd4 Nbd7 12.b3 Qc7 13.Bb2 Rfe8**) shows Black's ideal starting position. His tight structure keeps the White forces out of b5, c5, d5, e5 and f5, while pawn breaks based on ...b6-b5 or ...d6-d5 must be carefully weighed by White on every move.

White's plan (from the same diagram) consists of discouraging Black's ...b6-b5 and ...d6-d5 pawn breaks by placing Rooks on c1 and d1, or on e2 and d1 (this particular setup allows White to quickly double Rooks on the e-file or d-file). Once this prophylactic work is taken care of (note how most of the White forces aim at the b5 and d5 squares), White will gain more space and play for a kingside attack by f2-f4 and g3-g4-g5.

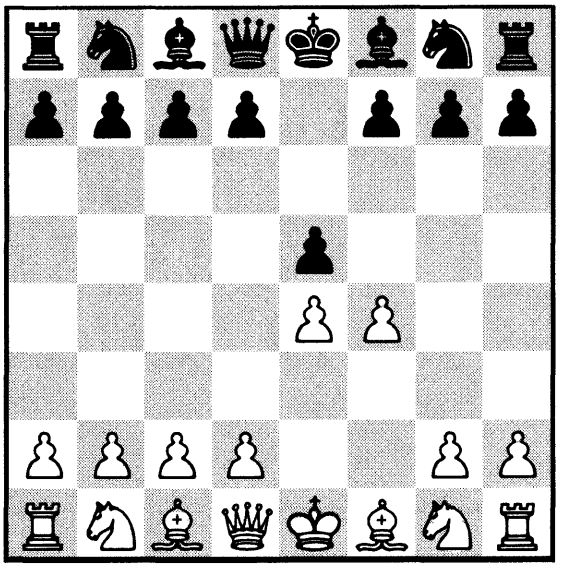
One might think that the first player's spatial advantage should eventually offer him chances for success. However, Black's position is so full of latent energy and so devoid of weaknesses that it has proven to be, over and over again, a very tough nut to crack

King's Gambit

This very old opening (popular until the start of the 20th Century) is rarely seen in modern times because it weakens the White King and leaves Black with many tempting defenses to choose from.

Nevertheless, players like Spassky, Fischer and Judit Polgar have used it with success, and I wouldn't be surprised to see it come back in fashion at some time or another.

(43)



(The swashbuckling *King's Gambit*)

After **1.e4 e5 2.f4** White places immediate pressure against Black's e-pawn and looks forward to making use of his open f-file after he plays Nf3, Bc4 and 0-0.

If Black takes the f4-pawn, White succeeds in gaining a majority of center pawns, and he will use these by grabbing the center with d2-d4.

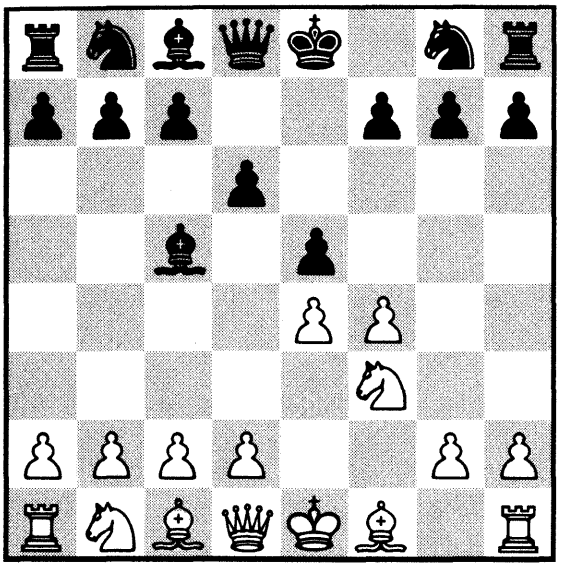
Black's counters include the following three general ideas:

1) Taking on f4 (**2...exf4**) and then holding onto his extra wood with ...g7-g5. Black's mass of kingside pawns gains space, but the ...g7-g5 advance also wastes time and weakens Black's King.

2) Striking back in the center with **2...d5** Known as the *Falkbeer Counter Gambit.* In this case Black is the one who gives up a pawn in order to grab the initiative.

3) Declining the gambit with **2...Bc5 3.Nf3** White loses after 3.fxe5?? Qh4+. **3...d6** keeps a solid position in the center and places the dark-squared Bishop on the strong c5-g1 diagonal (stopping White from castling kingside).

(44)



(King's Gambit Declined)

White's plans (from diagram 44) usually center around the creation of a big center with **4.c3** followed by d2-d4, or simple development based on **4.Bc4**, 5.d3, and then the eradication of the annoying c5-Bishop by Nb1-c3-a4xc5.

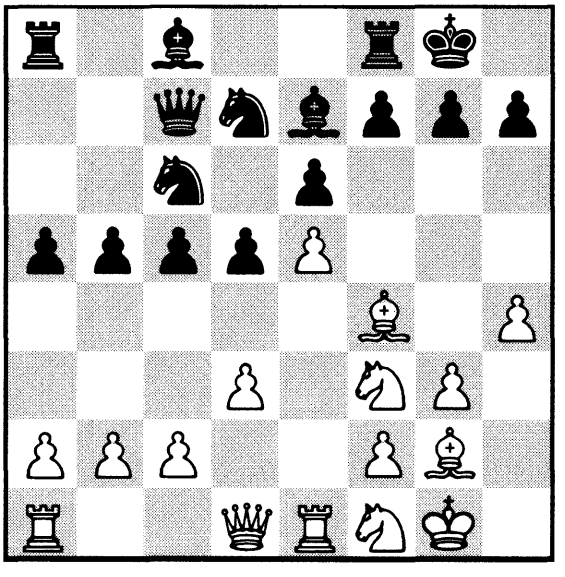
King's Indian Attack

The *KIA* is one of those systems that most chess masters use at some point in their development, before giving it up and moving on to more mainstream openings.

Easy to learn and very aggressive, the main position can be reached by 1.Nf3 (**1.Nf3 d5 2.g3 e6 3.Bg2 Nf6 4.0-0 c5 5.d3 Nc6 6.Nbd2 Be7 7.e4**) or by 1.e4 (**1.e4 e6 2.d3 d5 3.Nd2 Nf6 4.Ngf3 c5 5.g3 Nc6 6.Bg2 Be7 7.0-0**).

The further moves **7...0-0 8.e5 Nd7 9.Re1 b5 10.Nf1 Qc7 11.Bf4 a5 12.h4** make the nature of the struggle very clear.

(45)



(Mutual wing attacks in the *KIA*)

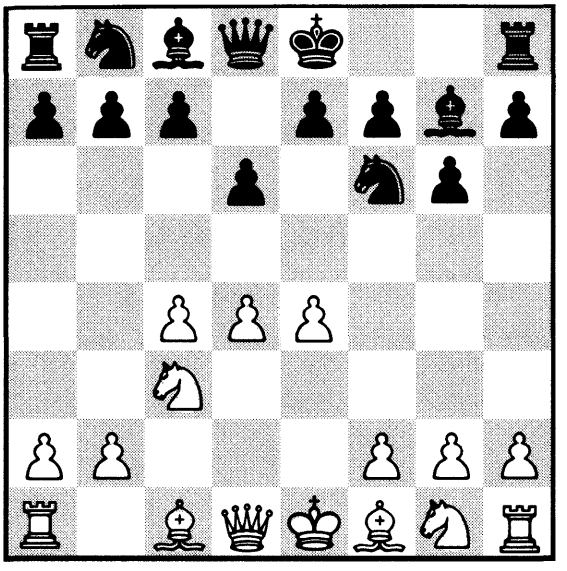
White's advanced e-pawn virtually cuts the board in half, separating Black's pieces on the queenside from Black's kingside forces. Black intends to continue annexing queenside space with ...b5-b4 followed by ...a5-a4-a3, etc. White will try to create weak dark-squares in Black's kingside by h4-h5-h6 and Nf1-h2-g4.

In practice, White's kingside attack tends to overshadow Black's demonstrations on the other side of the board, and this explains why aggressive players like Bobby Fischer—and amateurs who like a clear plan to follow—find this system enjoyable to play. (For a further look at this position, see Overprotection, page 229.)

King's Indian Defense

This opening is a favorite of fighting players like Fischer and Kasparov. Black develops his kingside pieces and castles, allowing White to build a large center (**1.d4 Nf6 2.c4 g6 3.Nc3 Bg7 4.e4 d6**).

(46)



(Starting position of the *KID*)

Black's strategy revolves around two important ideas:

1) He claims a share of the center with ...c7-c5: If White closes the center with d4-d5, Black can open up the e-file with ...e7-e6, or he can play for queenside expansion with ...b7-b5 (notice how Black is playing on the side where his pawns point. A detailed description of pointing pawns can be found in the middlegame section).

   A typical sequence is: **5.Be2 0-0 6.Bg5** This is known as the *Averbakh Variation*. **6...c5 7.d5** and now, if Black decides to play for the ...b7-b5 advance, he must make preparatory moves like ...Nb8-a6-c7 followed by ...a6, ...Rb8 and finally ...b5. Note that a move like ...Nbd7 would not fit in here since it has nothing to do with Black's planned queenside advance.

It is important to note that Black's most common plan in the position after 7.d5 is **7...Qa5** Threatening ...Nxe4. **8.Bd2 e6**, opening the e-file for his Rooks.

2) He claims a share of the center with ...e7-e5: If White closes the center with d5 Black will seek his play on the kingside (once again, that is where his pawns point) with an eventual ...f7-f5 advance.

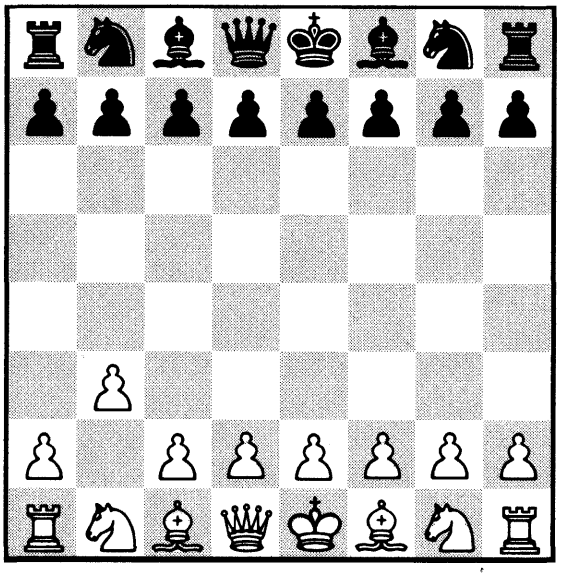
The most common sequence for this plan is: **5.Nf3 0-0 6.Be2 e5 7.0-0 Nc6 8.d5 Ne7 9.Ne1 Nd7** In closed positions both players must attack on the wings with pawns. These pawn advances give them more space and open files for their Rooks. Black's move prepares for an ...f7-f5 advance. **10.Nd3 f5 11.Bd2 Nf6** The immediate 11...f4 allows White to exchange off his bad Bishop by 12.Bg4. **12.f3 f4** when Black will go all out for a kingside attack via ...g5, ...h5 and ...g4, while White will play to conquer the queenside with c4-c5 and Rc1.

Larsen's Opening

This harmless looking opening (**1.b3**) wasn't given much respect until the great Danish Grandmaster Bent Larsen (who jokingly called it the *Baby Orangutan*) began winning one game after another with it in the late 1960s and early 1970s.

With **1.b3** White prepares to place his Bishop on the active b2-h8 diagonal. Though this lets Black take an immediate spatial edge with **1...e5** or **1...d5**, White hopes to chip away at the enemy center with his pieces (Bb2 and Nf3) and with his pawns (c2-c4 and f2-f4). Is Black's center strong or overextended? That's what this battle is all about!

(47)



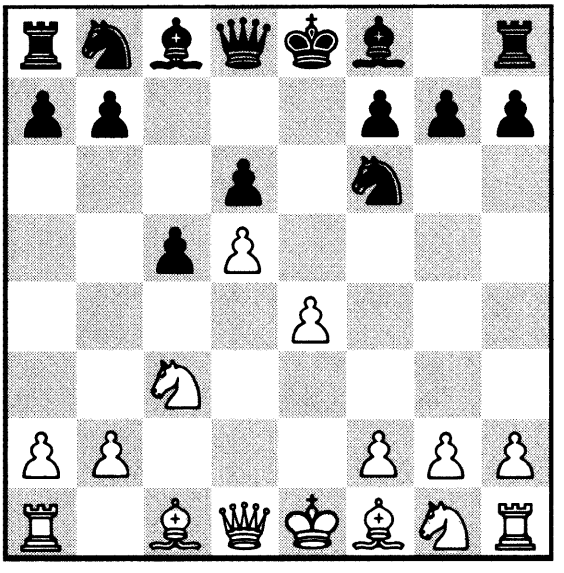
(Larsen's innocent looking opening)

One normal sequence is **1.b3 e5** Black immediately grabs some central space. **2.Bb2** The first strike against this pawn. **2...Nc6 3.e3 d5** Black wants it all! Now White must react aggressively or he will be overrun in the middle. **4.Bb5** Pinning the Knight and renewing the threat against e5. **4...Bd6** and now moves like **5.f4** (risky since it weakens the position of the White King), **5.Nf3** and **5.c4** (taking aim at d5) all continue the battle against Black's center.

Modern Benoni Defense

This very sharp opening delineates the plans for both sides very quickly. The moves **1.d4 Nf6 2.c4 c5 3.d5 e6 4.Nc3 exd5 5.cxd5 d6 6.e4** (see diagram 48) creates advantages for both sides. White has a pawn majority in the center while Black has a pawn majority on the queenside.

(48)



(A case of mutual pawn majorities)

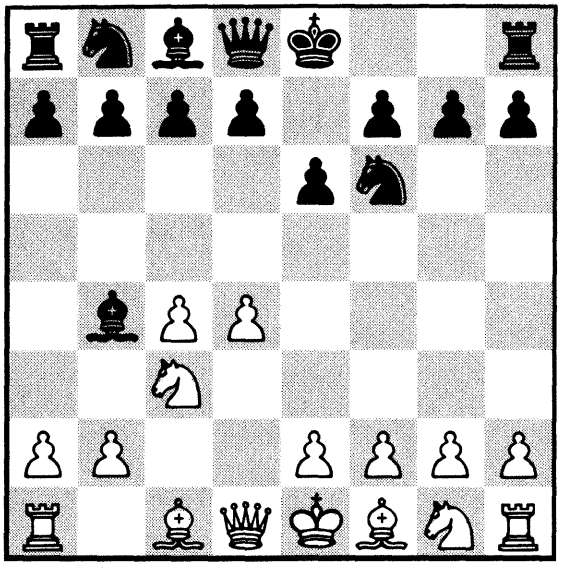
All further play will relate directly to these imbalances. Black will try to expand on the queenside (getting his pawn majority into motion) by ...Nb8-a6-c7 followed by ...a7-a6, ...Rb8 and ...b7-b5. White will counter with a central strike based on f2-f4, Ng1-f3 and e4-e5.

Naturally, as both sides rush to employ their majorities, they will also take a bit of time out to stop the opponent from achieving his own goals. For example: **6...g6 7.Nf3 Bg7** The Bishop is not only actively placed here, it also aims at e5 and will make White's advance harder to achieve. **8.Be2 0-0 9.0-0 a6** 9...Na6 followed by 10...Nc7 is also possible. **10.a4 Re8 11.Qc2 Nbd7** when both sides will experience some difficulty in employing their pawn majorities. White has gained control over b5 while Black has gained control over e5. The battle for these points will rage on, of course, and a particularly difficult game is in store for both players.

Nimzo-Indian Defense

This extremely popular opening (**1.d4 Nf6 2.c4 e6 3.Nc3 Bb4**—the Bishop move pins the Knights and fights for control of the e4-square) has been played, at one time or another, by just about every top Grandmaster. Black shows a willingness to give up his Bishop in exchange for a free development and play against White's doubled pawns.

(49)



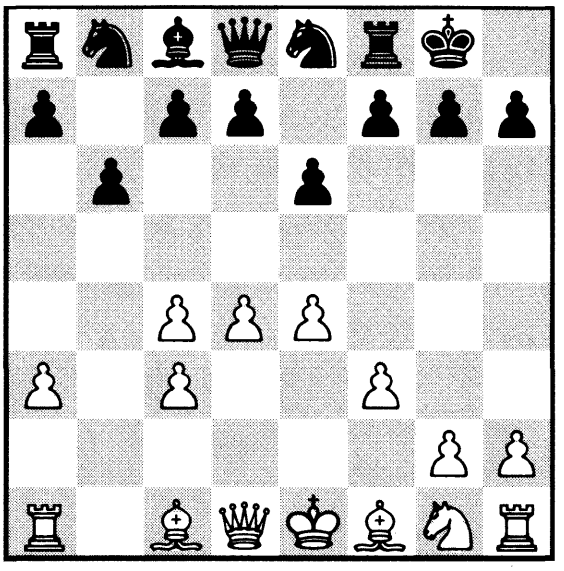
(The *Nimzo-Indian Defense*)

One common example of divergent strategies is **4.e3** Known as the *Rubinstein Variation.* **4...c5 5.Nf3 Nc6 6.Bd3 Bxc3+ 7.bxc3 d6** This is the *Hübner Variation.* **8.e4 e5 9.d5 Ne7** when White's two Bishops are not very effective due to the closed center In this line, the Knights often turn out to be the more valuable minor piece.

Another line, sometimes called the *Capablanca Variation* and at other times called the *Classical Variation,* shows the Bishops in a better light after **4.Qc2** White is willing to waste some time to prevent the doubling of his pawns. **4...0-0 5.a3 Bxc3+ 6.Qxc3 b6** when White's two Bishops can easily become very active, but Black's lead in development and ability to hit the center with ...c5 or ...d5 compensates for this.

Perhaps the most striking case of colliding ideas occurs in the *Samisch Variation*: **4.a3 Bxc3+ 5.bxc3 0-0 6.f3 b6 7.e4 Ne8**.

(50)



(White's center vs. the weakness on c4)

White's two Bishops are strong here and his large center is impressive. Black scoffs at all this and will take aim at the weak c4-pawn with ...Ba6 and ...Nb8-c6-a5. Other moves like ...c7-c5 followed by ...Rc8 and even ...Nd6 can easily finish the poor c4-pawn off.

What's more important, White's plusses or Black's? Who knows; that's what makes this opening so interesting!

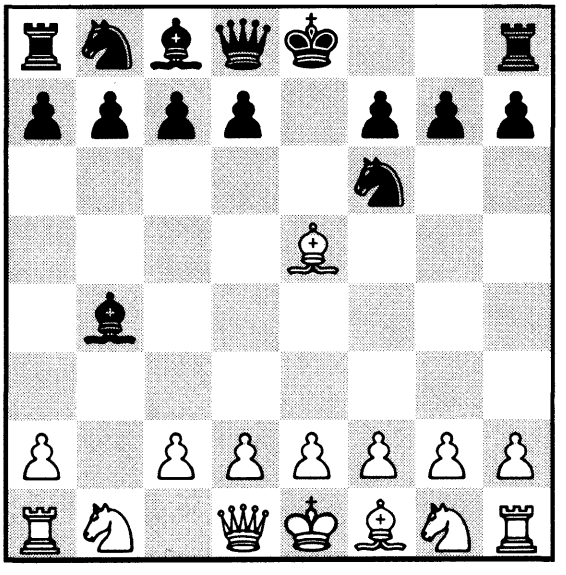
Orangutan

According to the Polish Grandmaster Saviely Tartakower, he was thinking about this queenside thrust while visiting a zoo. Trying to come up with a proper name for **1.b4**, he entered the ape compound, saw an Orangutan and...

With 1.b4 White grabs queenside space and prepares to place his Bishop on the active b2-h8 diagonal. On the negative side, White has ignored the center and will eventually lose time defending his b-pawn, which is hanging out to dry on b4. Black has lots of playable answers, but the most promising is the obvious and logical **1...e5**, grabbing the center and creating an immediate threat against b4.

After the further **2.Bb2 Bxb4 3.Bxe5 Nf6** we can take stock of the plans for both sides.

(51)



(Black has a nice lead in development)

Black has given up the important central e-pawn for the White b-pawn. This exchange makes White happy, since he now owns a central majority of pawns. Due to this, White will eventually try to push these pawns down the board and grab space in the middle.

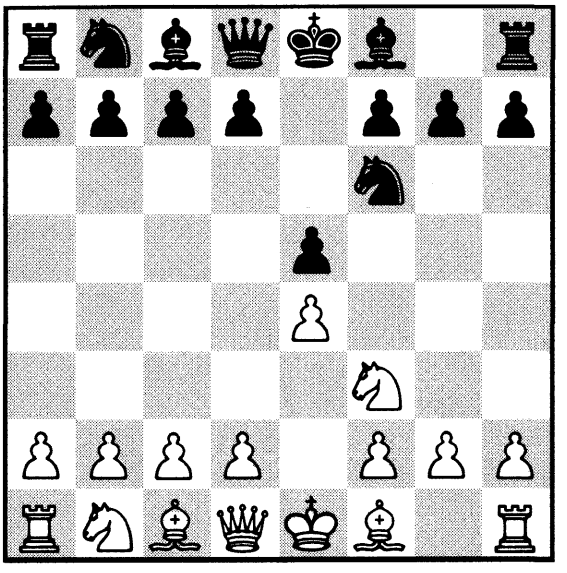
As promising as this may sound, White's long-term structural plus is more than counterbalanced by Black's lead in development and active pieces. Black will gain further time by ...0-0 followed by ...Re8 when White can easily fall prey to a quick attack.

Petroff Defense

Also known as the *Russian Game*, the *Petroff Defense* (**1.e4 e5 2.Nf3 Nf6**) is played to avoid any huge structural differences in the position and, as a result, to keep things as equal as possible.

Some openings, like the *Sicilian Defense* and the *French Defense*, are counterattacks that strive to wrest the initiative from White. Other openings, like the *Petroff*, seek to nullify the advantage of White's first move and achieve simple equality.

(52)



(The symmetrical *Petroff Defense*)

White's two main continuations are:

1) **3.d4 Nxe4 4.Bd3 d5 5.Nxe5 Bd6** (the popular 5...Nd7 leads to a quieter game) when Black has managed to continue the symmetry, but the play will soon heat up (White will strive to destroy Black's support point on e4 by playing c2-c4) and become rather complicated.

2) **3.Nxe5 d6** Avoiding the old trap 3...Nxe4? 4.Qe2 when White wins at least a pawn. **4.Nf3 Nxe4 5.d4 d5** when the exchange of the e-pawns and lack of central tension gives Black good chances for equality. It's also worth mentioning that American Champion Frank Marshall,

who liked to play for a win on the Black side around the turn of the century, gave it up because of **5.Qe2 Qe7 6.d3**, and White has what few chances there are.

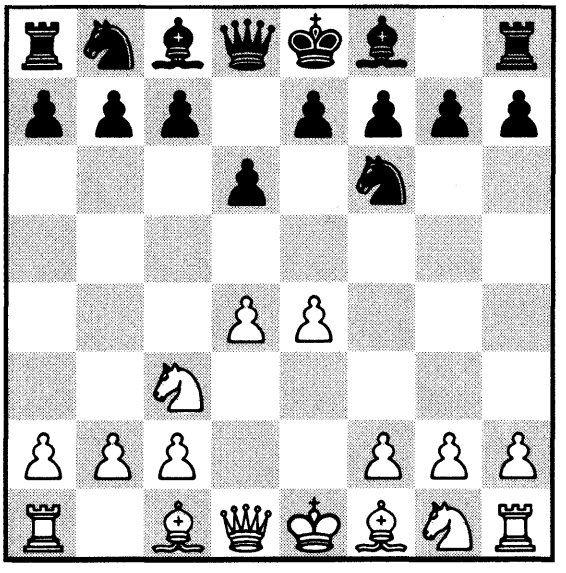
In general, the *Petroff Defense* is played by those who don't mind drawing as Black. If you are in a must-win situation, this opening would not be a good choice.

Pirc Defense

Considered inferior in the early 20th century, the *Pirc* (and the *Modern Defense* [1.e4 g6], which has identical strategic themes) is now a respected Black system used by such fine players as Gulko, Nunn and Seirawan.

Though the moves **1.e4 d6 2.d4 Nf6 3.Nc3 g6** appear to give White a free hand in the center, Black intends to strike back and prove that the "mighty" White center is, in reality, a target.

(53)



(Beginning position of the *Pirc Defense*)

This lack of respect for enemy pawn centers shows the same philosophical leanings as *Alekhine's Defense* and the *Grünfeld Defense*. In the present case, Black will develop in a calm manner, get his King safely castled, and only then lash out in the middle with either ...c7-c5 or ...e7-e5 (queenside demonstrations by ...c7-c6 followed by ...b7-b5 are also common).

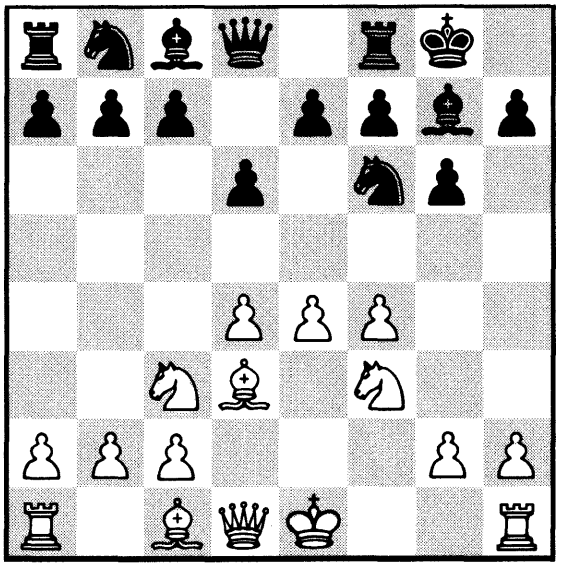
White's most common central formations are:

1) He solidifies his center with **4.f3** (which also keeps the Black pieces out of g4) and then plays for a kingside attack by Be3, Qd2, h2-h4-h5. This is a dangerous plan, but Black gets adequate play with **4...Bg7 5.Be3 c6** Also

possible is 5...0-0 6.Qd2 e5. **6.Qd2 b5**, when Black maps out his own territory on the queenside.

2) He goes for the gusto with **4.f4** Called the *Austrian Attack.* **4...Bg7 5.Nf3** This greedy plan (White gains all the space he can) puts maximum pressure on Black, but the second player has a couple ways to seek central counterplay after **5...0-0** Hitting the center immediately with 5...c5!? is a popular alternative. **6.Bd3** (other moves are also tried, but this tends to be White's most common choice):

(54)



(The aggressive *Austrian Attack*)

2.a) Black goes for a quick ...e7-e5 advance with **6...Nc6** This Knight move (mixed with a later ...Bg4) also places pressure on the d4-pawn.

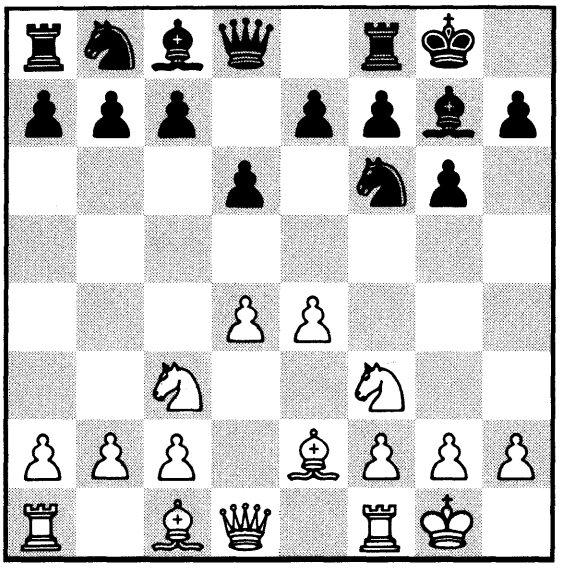
2.b) Black plays to hit White's center with his c-pawn by **6...Na6** followed by 7...c5.

In all lines of the *Austrian Attack*, Black must seek counterplay against the huge White center as quickly as he can, or risk getting squashed by a lack of space and the rampaging pawns.

3) He develops in a safe and logical fashion with **4.Nf3** This is called the *Classical Variation.* After **4...Bg7 5.Be2 0-0**

6.0-0 (see diagram 55) White tries to keep Black's counterplay to a minimum, while Black must make use of the usual plans via **6...Bg4** (preparing to put pressure on d4 via ...Nc6), **6...Nc6** (hitting d4 and preparing ...e7-e5), **6...Nbd7** (preparation for ...e7-e5), **6...c6** (seeks queenside expansion by ...b7-b5), **6...a6** (this intends ...b7-b5 followed by ...Bc8-b7), **6...Na6** (preparing for ...c7-c5) or **6...c5**.

(55)



(The calm *Classical Variation*)

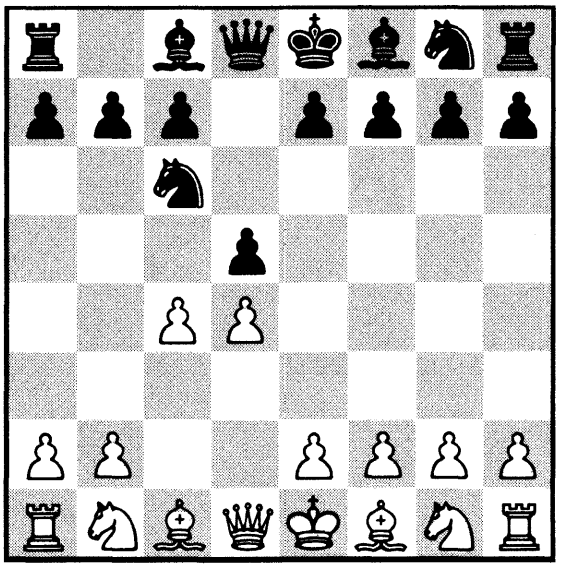
In general, this *Classical Variation* makes it hard for Black to generate winning chances due to White's smooth development, spatial plus, and lack of weaknesses.

Queen's Gambit, Chigorin System

The great Russian master, M. Chigorin (1850-1908), was known for his preference of Knights over Bishops. It's not too surprising then, that he invented an opening that happily exchanges Bishops for Knights at the first opportunity.

Though **1.d4 d5 2.c4 Nc6** wasn't really taken to heart by many other players of his time (it broke too many classical rules), quite a few creative individuals have enriched this opening with new ideas in recent years.

(56)



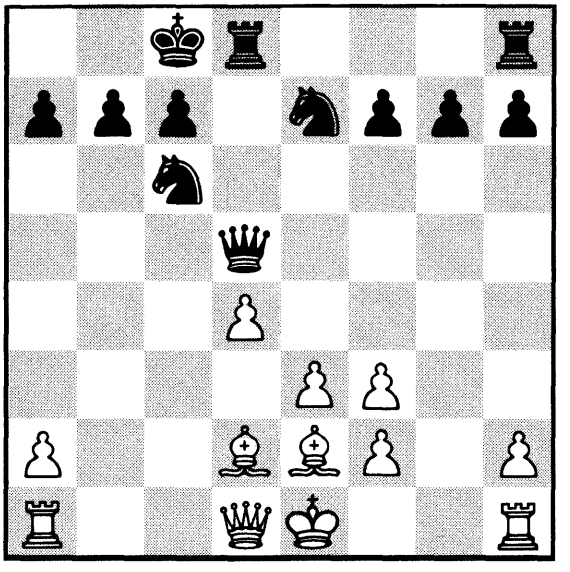
(*Chigorin's System*)

Black's 2...Nc6 seems odd because it blocks his c-pawn. However, placing immediate piece pressure on White's central position has its good points and the first player must proceed very carefully.

One line that illustrates the central battle and also highlights the fight between Bishops and Knights goes as follows: **3.Nf3** I prefer 3.Nc3. **3...Bg4** Black goes all out for activity. **4.cxd5 Bxf3** The first Bishop is happily removed from the board. **5.gxf3 Qxd5 6.e3 e5** Every move Black plays is aggressive. **7.Nc3 Bb4 8.Bd2 Bxc3** Now Black has two Knights against two Bishops. Normally this would favor the Bishops, but in the present posi-

tion White's pawn center and Bishops show a remarkable lack of activity. **9.bxc3 exd4 10.cxd4 Nge7 11.Be2 0-0-0** and White's enormous central preponderance of pawns isn't able to advance in a productive manner (see diagram 57). Black will continue with ...f7-f5 and ...Rhe8 with a very harmonious setup.

(57)



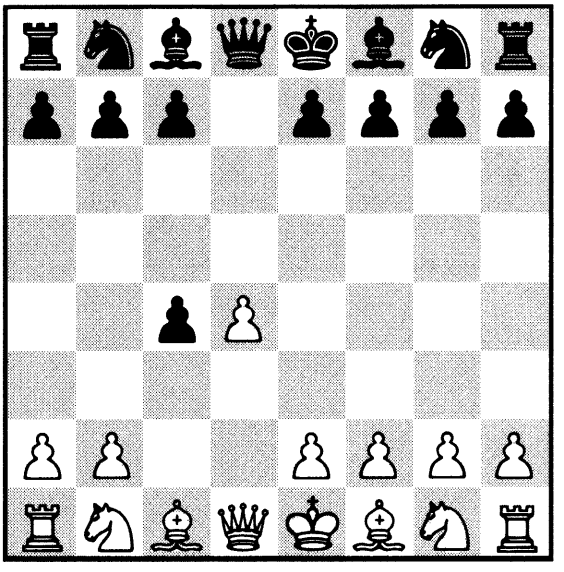
(White's big pawn center isn't going anywhere)

Note how Black's willingness to trade off his central d-pawn for White's side c-pawn allows the first player to build a strong pawn center. Also note that Black is quite willing to let White have this center as long as he can restrain and attack it with his Knights and pawns.

Queen's Gambit Accepted

Many players who don't mind giving White a preponderance of pawns in the center have found the *QGA* to be the opening for them. Fischer (in his 1992 return match with Spassky), Seirawan, Timman, Anand, Short and a host of other world class competitors have found that this opening (**1.d4 d5 2.c4 dxc4**) mixes classic solidity with central counterplay and quick, active piece deployment.

(58)



(The popular *QGA*)

The negative side of the *Queen's Gambit Accepted* is obvious: Black gives up a valuable center pawn for the less useful c4-pawn. This allows White to build a strong pawn center with an immediate **3.e4** or, if this doesn't appeal to him, he can proceed more slowly with **3.e3** (3.Nf3 is another main line, often transposing into positions reached by 3.e3).

After **3.e4** Black must organize quick counterplay against White's center pawns with either **3...Nf6**, **3...Nc6**, **3...c5** or **3...e5**. The lines are complex, and Black has shown that his fighting chances must be taken very seriously indeed.

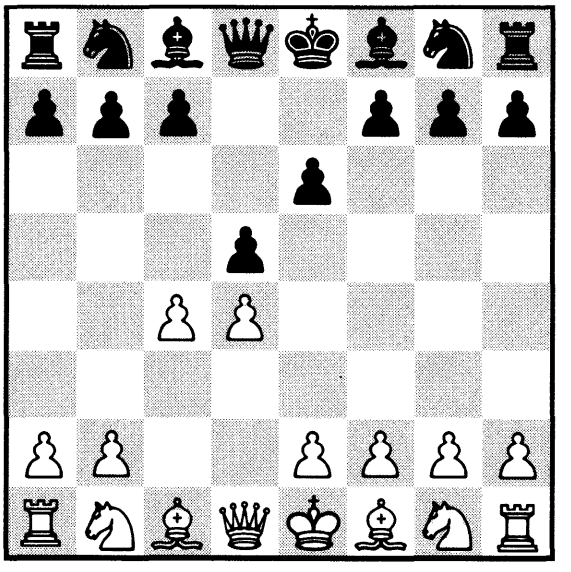
The more restrained **3.e3** allows Black to demonstrate that he has no intention of trying to hold onto his pawn (which turns

into a disaster: 3...b5? 4.a4 c6 5.axb5 cxb5 6.Qf3 and White wins a piece! This famous old trap is well worth knowing), and instead plays for isolated d-pawn positions after **3...Nf6 4.Bxc4 e6 5.Nf3 c5** Immediately chipping away at White's center. **6.0-0 cxd4** Also popular is 6...a6 followed by ...b5, ...Bb7, ...Nbd7 and ...Be7. **7.exd4 Nc6 8.Nc3** when White's isolated d-pawn gives him more space and kingside attacking chances, but Black's control over the d5-square and his potential to eventually create pressure against the d4-pawn keeps the game double-edged. The examination of *Isolated Pawns* on page 241 will prove extremely valuable to players wishing to try either side of this complex opening.

Queen's Gambit Declined

The classical *QGD* has been a part of virtually every World Champion's repertoire. **1.d4 d5 2.c4** Placing pressure on d5 and preparing to open the c-file with an eventual cxd5. **2...e6** Black stands firm in the center and intends to develop harmoniously with ...Nf6, ...Be7 and ...0-0.

(59)



(*Queen's Gambit Declined*)

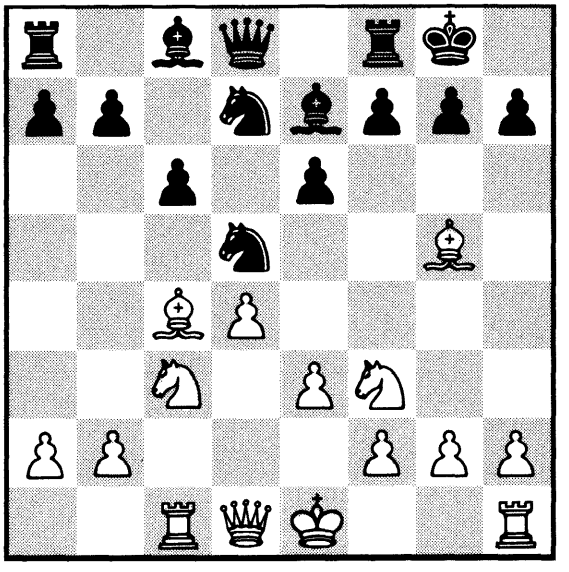
The two problems Black experiences with this opening are his blocked light-squared Bishop and his lack of queenside space, but the very popular *Tartakower Defense* seems to have created at least a partial solution: **3.Nc3 Nf6 4.Bg5** Increasing the pressure against d5. **4...Be7 5.e3 0-0 6.Nf3 h6 7.Bh4 b6** when the Bishop will find a good diagonal with ...Bb7, and Black's spatial woes will be alleviated by ...Nbd7 followed by ...c7-c5.

QGD, Capablanca's Freeing Maneuver

Originally tried by Showalter in the 1890s, this concept was popularized by Capablanca throughout the 1920s.

After the moves **1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.Nc3 Nf6 4.Bg5 Be7 5.e3 0-0 6.Nf3 Nbd7 7.Rc1 c6 8.Bd3** Black has less territory than his opponent. By continuing with **8...dxc4 9.Bxc4 Nd5** Black makes use of the rule stating that a cramped player should free his position by seeking exchanges.

(60)



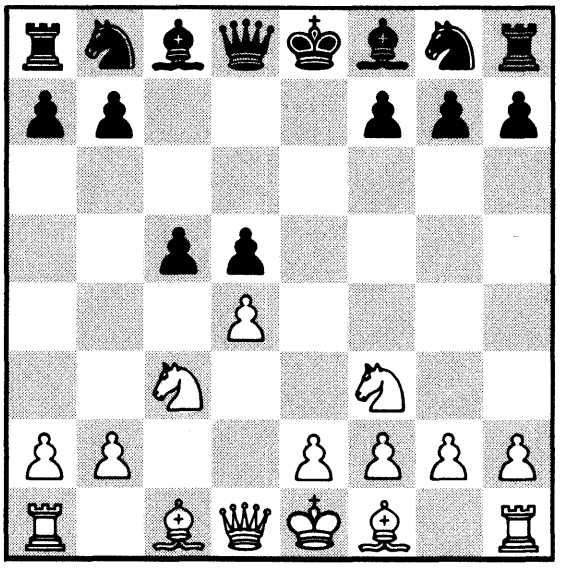
(Capablanca's Freeing Maneuver)

The second player makes considerable spatial gains after **10.Bxe7 Qxe7 11.0-0 Nxc3 12.Rxc3 e5 13.dxe5 Nxe5 14.Nxe5 Qxe5**.

QGD, Tarrasch Defense

Siegbert Tarrasch, the great German Grandmaster, believed this to be the only correct way to play the *Queen's Gambit Declined.* After **1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.Nc3 c5 4.cxd5 exd5 5.Nf3** Black happily accepts the fact that he will get an isolated pawn (after White eventually plays dxc5), but expects full compensation in the form of active piece play, quick and easy development, and plenty of central space.

(61)



(Tarrasch's favorite defense)

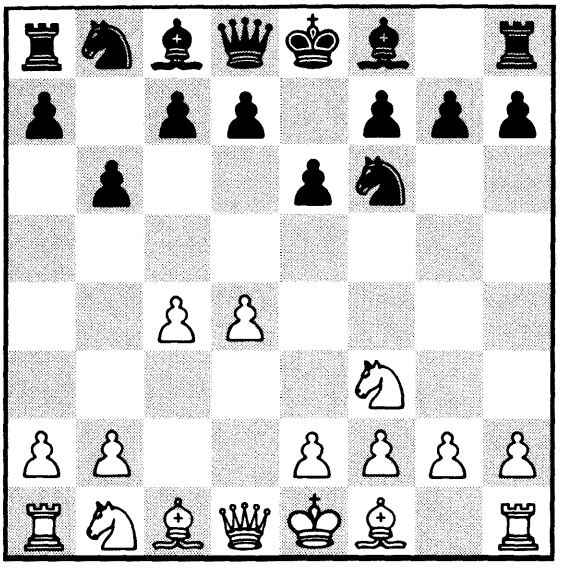
White's best setup was discovered by Polish super GM Akiba Rubinstein: **5...Nc6 6.g3** (followed by Bg2 and 0-0) when the fianchettoed Bishop will help place pressure on the d5-pawn.

All the usual isolated pawn strategies apply here.

Queen's Indian Defense

Quieter than the *Nimzo-Indian*, White avoids any pins by ...Bb4 and instead calmly develops his kingside pieces (**1.d4 Nf6 2.c4 e6 3.Nf3**). However, where 3.Nc3 fights for control of the key e4-square, 3.Nf3 allows Black to grab hold of it by **3...b6** when we arrive at the starting position of the *QID*.

(62)



(*Queen's Indian Defense*)

After White plays **4.g3** Black has a choice between two popular lines:

1) Black plays the combative **4...Ba6**, creating an immediate attack against the c4-pawn. This odd-looking move begins a quick fight and forces White to defend c4 in some uncomfortable manner (5.Nbd2 takes the Knight away from its most effective square on c3; 5.Qc2, 5.Qa4 or 5.Qb3 all pull the Queen away from her defense of d4; 5.b3 weakens the c3-square).

   After White guards his pawn, Black can continue developing or he can stir up more complications with central strikes via ...c7-c5 or ...d7-d5. In some cases the strange ...b6-b5 can even be considered.

White, in general, wants to complete his development (after defending c4—5.b3 is the most popular method of doing this) with Bg2 and 0-0. In this case the absence of Black's light-squared Bishop from the a8-h1 diagonal might be felt, and White's spatial plus in the center might also become a factor.

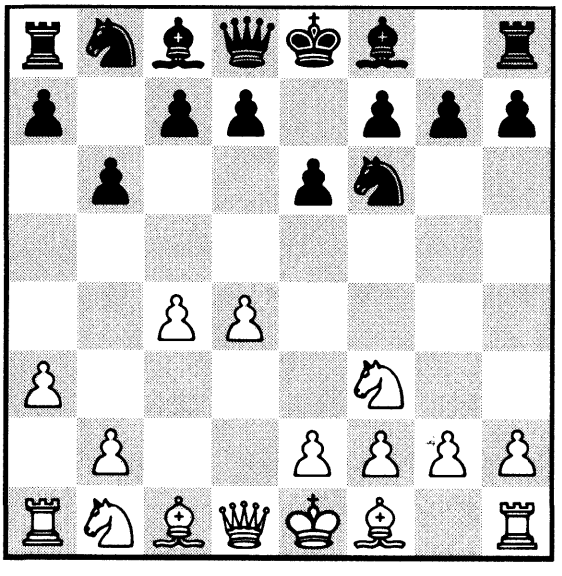
2) Black takes aim at the e4-square with the logical **4...Bb7**. In this line, White will usually get some advantage if he can take control of e4 and eventually advance his e-pawn to this square. This can be done (after Bg2 and 0-0) by continuing with Qc2 and Nc3. At times, White can also close in the Black b7-Bishop by d4-d5 with a considerable spatial edge.

Black will fight these evil White plans with (after ...Be7 and ...0-0) ...Ne4 followed, in some cases, by ...f5. In general, White gains a very small edge from the opening, but careful play will usually allow Black to secure eventual equality.

Play might go as follows: **5.Bg2 Be7 6.0-0 0-0 7.Nc3** Threatening to grab hold of e4 by Qc2 **7...Ne4 8.Qc2 Nxc3 9.Qxc3 Be4 10.Ne1 Bxg2 11.Nxg2 Bf6** when ...c5 or ...d5 will give Black a sound position.

It should be added that, instead of 4.g3, White can also try the *Petrosian System* with **4.a3**.

(63)



(QID, Petrosian System)

This move takes the b4-square away from Black's Bishop and prepares for Nc3, when the Knight can safely eye both d5 and e4.

Black has a few choices here and it is not clear which one is best Though **4...Ba6** and **4...c5** are interesting, most common is **4...Bb7 5.Nc3** when White's threat of d4-d5 is best met by **5...d5 6.cxd5**. Now Black has two different strategies:

1) Taking with the pawn, **6...exd5** gives him firm control over e4. However, the fact that the c7-pawn stands on an open file (and is therefore potentially weak) means that, eventually, Black will have to play ...c7-c5. White can then take on c5 (dxc5) and create (after Black recaptures via ...bxc5) the interesting scenario known as HANGING PAWNS. These pawns (on c5 and d5) can be strong or weak (are they space-gainers or targets?), and this structure should be studied in detail in the Middlegame section (page 245).

2) Taking on d5 with the Knight, **6...Nxd5** leads to a battle where one side grabs the center with pawns (thinking that it will gain space and eventually crush the opponent in its coils) while the other side tries to show that this center is a target.

   The position after **7.Qc2 Be7 8.e4 Nxc3 9.bxc3** is a tough one. White will guard his center pawns with his pieces and use them to restrain the enemy forces. Black will attack these pawns (after castling) with ...c7-c5 and ...Nc6 in an effort to show their negative side. Both sides have chances and the struggle will be a dynamic one.

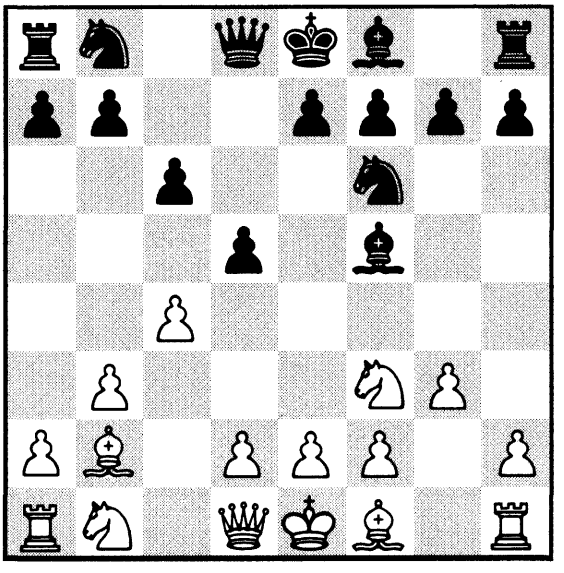
Réti Opening

This opening is often used as a transpositional device with White trying to lure his opponent into lines that he may not be familiar with.

The first point of **1.Nf3** is to stop Black from playing ...e7-e5 (which is a major reply against 1.c4). For example, after **1.Nf3 c5 2.c4**, Black is in a symmetrical *English* without having had the option of trying the ...e7-e5 systems.

In general, the actual *Réti Opening* centers around White playing **1.Nf3** followed by c2-c4, g2-g3 (b2-b3 might also be thrown in). A typical line goes **1...d5 2.c4 c6 3.b3 Nf6 4.Bb2 Bf5 5.g3** with Bg2 to come.

(64)

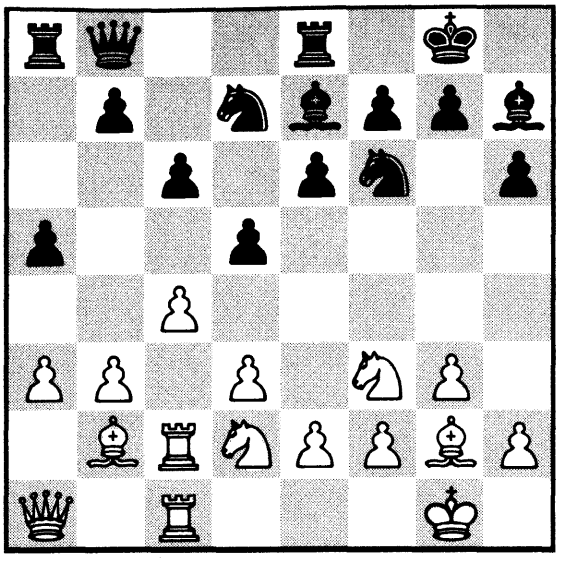


(*Réti Opening*)

Réti's idea was to control key central squares with pieces rather than pawns. In the diagram, we see White's Knight and b2-Bishop controlling the d4 and e5 squares, while the c4 pawn (mixed with the Bishop that is moving to g2) eyes d5.

White's position is very flexible; after Bg2 and 0-0 White can place his d-pawn on d4 and try for a spatial plus, or (and this is more in the spirit of the *Réti*) he can play d2-d3 followed by Nbd2, a3 (intending to expand on the queenside with b3-b4), Ra1-c1-c2, Qa1 and Rfc1.

(65)



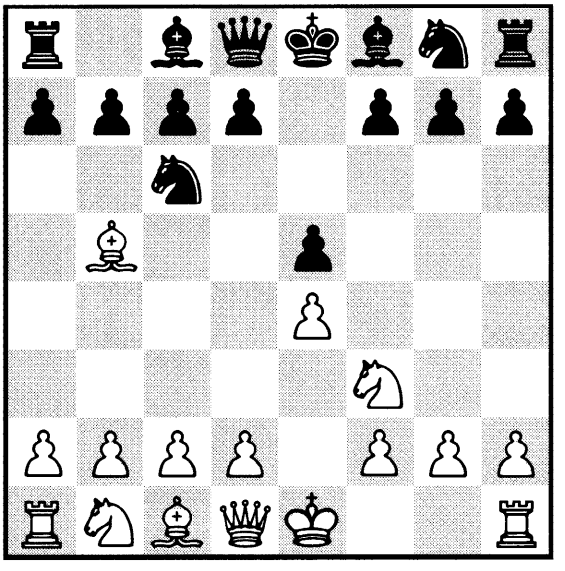
(White's pieces take aim at the center)

Black's plans (from diagram 65) can include queenside expansion by ...b7-b5, or a central advance by ...Bd6 followed by .. e6-e5.

Ruy Lopez

This venerable opening (also known as the *Spanish Opening*) is so rich in strategic ideas that it has remained popular for almost 150 years. After **1.e4 e5 2.Nf3 Nc6 3.Bb5** White places pressure on c6 (which can easily translate to pressure against e5, since the c6-Knight is the main defender of that pawn) and tells Black that any move of the d7-pawn will result in the c6-Knight being pinned.

(66)



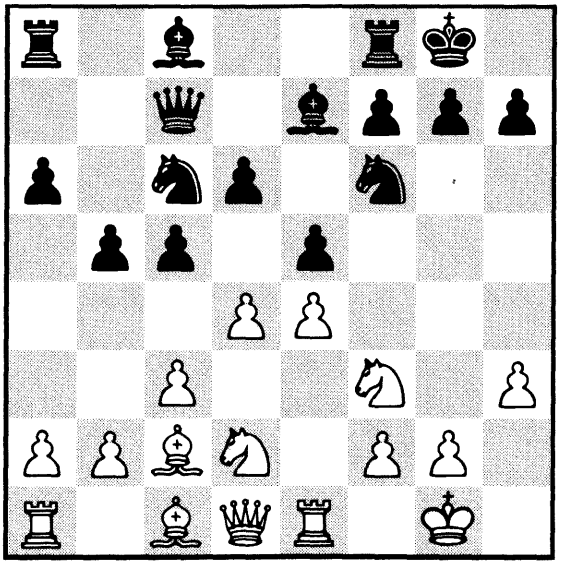
(The ever-popular *Ruy Lopez*)

In general, Black will play for a strong point on e5 This means that Black will guard his e5-pawn with his Knight, his d-pawn, and his h8-Rook via ...0-0 and ...Rfe8. In some lines, this pawn can be given additional support by ...Ng8-f6-d7 and ...Bf8-e7-f6. By holding on to the e5-pawn, Black guarantees that he will retain a certain part of the center for himself. He will only capture a White pawn on d4 with his e-pawn if he can avoid losing too much central influence.

Though Black has many developmental schemes to choose from, the most highly respected is the *Closed Defense*: **3...a6 4.Ba4** The *Exchange Variation*, with 4.Bxc6 dxc6, is also seen from time to time. After 5.d4 exd4 6.Qxd4 Qxd4 7.Nxd4 White

will try to trade off all the pieces and win a King and pawn endgame by means of his superior pawn structure. Black will avoid exchanging too many pieces and try to make use of the power of his two Bishops. **4...Nf6 5.0-0 Be7** The *Open Defense*, via 5...Nxe4 6.d4 b5 7.Bb3 d5, is a favorite of Grandmasters Korchnoi, Anand and Yusupov. In this line, Black takes on more structural weaknesses but also assures himself of greater piece activity then he would normally obtain. **6.Re1 b5** Black appears to be gaining time and queenside space with these pawn advances, but the b5-pawn might also end up being a target after an eventual a2-a4 by White. After 150 years it is still not clear who's getting the best of the deal on the queenside. **7.Bb3 d6 8.c3 0-0 9.h3** Believe it or not, this move gives d4 more support! The justification for this seemingly outrageous statement is simple: White's Knight is a major defender of d4. By stopping Black from pinning it with ...Bg4, White retains his Knight and also retains control over that d4-square! **9...Na5** Known as the *Chigorin Variation.* More modern lines are 9...Re8, beginning to give e5 lots of protection, and 9...Nb8, swinging the Knight around to d7 followed by the active placement of the light-squared Bishop to b7 **10.Bc2 c5 11.d4 Qc7 12.Nbd2 Nc6**

(67)



(*Chigorin Variation* of the *Ruy Lopez*)

This interesting position has been a common visitor to chess tournaments for nearly a century. Black lays claim to some

queenside space and a solid influence in the center (notice his firm grip on e5). White can choose one of two plans here:

1) Closing the center by **13.d5** gives White central space and allows him to seek his play on the queenside or kingside (when the center is closed, you must play with your pawns on the wings. This allows you to gain space and create open files for your Rooks). Queenside play can be started by a2-a4 and b2-b4. Kingside play can be created by Nd2-f1 followed by g2-g4 and Nf1-g3.

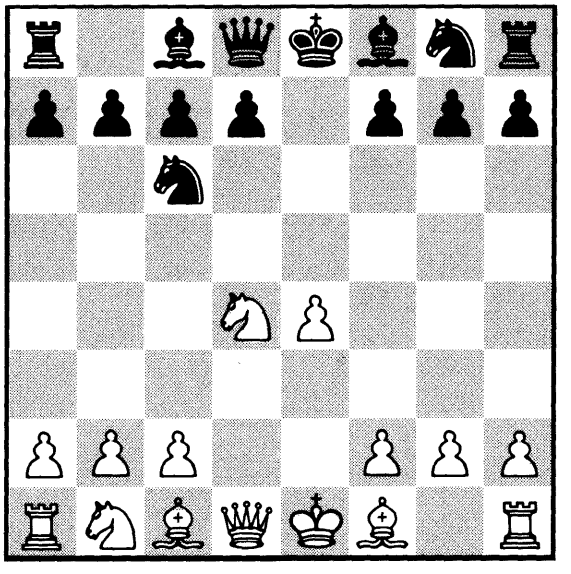
   This center closing strategy is the modern way to play the position and is the reason most players try 9...Re8 or 9...Nb8 instead of 9...Na5.

2) Getting rid of the pawn tension by **13.dxc5 dxc5 14.Nf1** allows White to try and make use of the potentially weak squares on d5 and f5. After **14...Be6 15.Ne3 Rad8 16.Qe2** White will stuff a Knight on f5 and often gain the two Bishops as a result. Black will try to create his own SUPPORT POINTS by ...c5-c4 and ...Nf6-d7-c5-d3. This plan used to be a favorite of Bobby Fischer, but it's now thought to only be equal after best play.

Scotch Opening

Known since 1750, this opening was a rare visitor to modern tournament play until Kasparov scored some big wins with the Scotch and gave it a new lease on life. After **1.e4 e5 2.Nf3 Nc6 3.d4 cxd4 4.Nxd4** White creates a wide open position where he has some chance to turn the squares on f5 and d5 into homes for his Knights. The central structure with a White pawn on e4 versus a Black pawn on d6 gives White an obvious advantage in space, but Black is able to generate plenty of counterplay due to the fact that his forces can be developed quickly and actively.

(68)



(A new lease on life for the *Scotch Opening*)

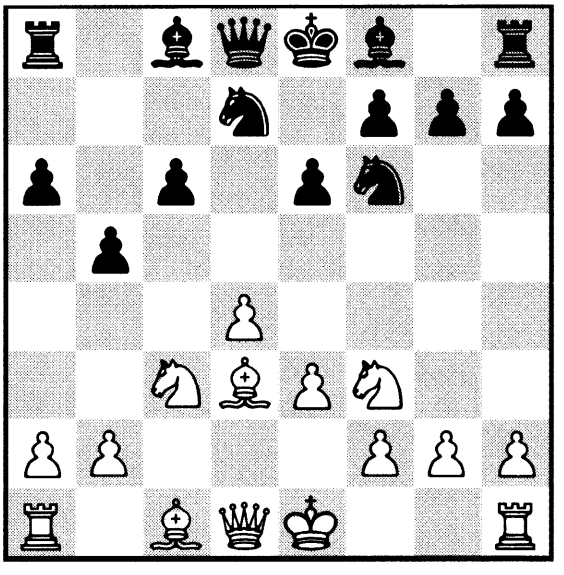
Black's most popular responses to the *Scotch* are **4...Bc5** (developing the Bishop to an active square with gain of time) and **4...Nf6**, bringing the Knight to bear on White's proud, but slightly vulnerable, e4-pawn.

Semi-Slav Defense

The *Semi-Slav* is as popular as the actual *Slav Defense*. The lines tend to be very complicated and a tremendous amount of theoretical knowledge is required to play this sharp system properly.

The beginning moves are: **1.d4 d5 2.c4 c6 3.Nf3 Nf6 4.Nc3 e6 5.e3** Also critical is the ultra-complicated *Botvinnik Variation*: 5.Bg5 dxc4 6.e4 b5 7.e5 h6 8.Bh4 g5 9.Nxh5 hxg5 10.Bxg5 with a crazed tactical battle in store. Deep preparation is of the utmost importance here, with many variations going past the thirtieth move! **5...Nbd7 6.Bd3 dxc4 7.Bxc4 b5 8.Bd3** From time to time White also tries 8.Be2 and 8.Bb3. **8...a6**.

(69)



(Main line *Semi-Slav*)

White will play for e4-e5 and a subsequent kingside attack. Black will place his c8-Bishop on b7 and then advance his c-pawn to c5. This is very important! If Black is not able to push his c-pawn to c5, it will end up as a permanent weakness on an open file.

Black's counterplay has proven highly effective in recent years since the Bishop on b7 becomes quite active while the White pawn on d4 can come under pressure. Note that White's

longed for e4-e5 advance is a double-edged sword because this hands the d5-square to the second player and also leaves the e5-pawn as a potential weakness after ...cxd4.

Sicilian Defense

The *Sicilian* has become Black's most popular answer to **1.e4** due to the difficult problems experienced by both players, who are often on the edge of a precipice. Though White can try many interesting sidelines after **1...c5**, the main positions arise after **2.Nf3** followed by 3.d4.

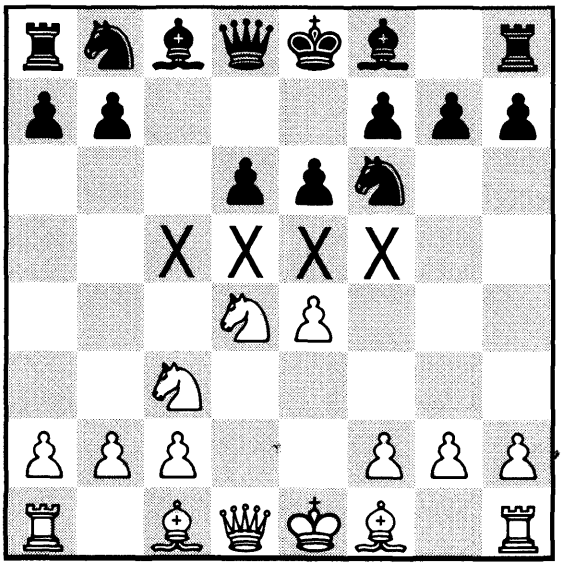
In general, Black strives for queenside play (thanks to the half open c-file) and is also on the lookout for central counterchances (a successful ...d5 advance is a major theme in the *Sicilian*).

White will either try for a central breakthrough or he will go all out for a kingside decision. This White dream of a knockout often makes an exchange of Queens desirable for Black, who doesn't need the Queens to pursue his queenside aspirations (on the other hand White, who is trying to mate the Black King, does need the heavy-fisted ladies).

Though Black can choose from dozens of complicated set-ups, the central situations tend to be divided into four groups:

1) Black places his pawns on e6 and d6.

(70)



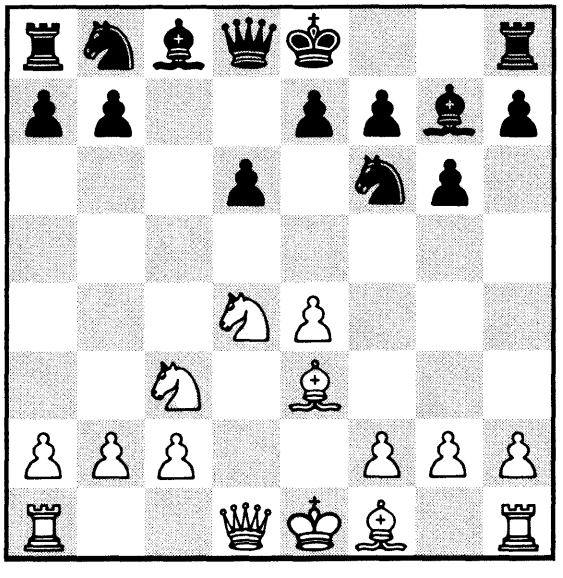
(Common *Sicilian* center that covers c5, d5, e5 and f5 squares)

This "little" pawn center (seen in diagram 70) gives Black control over the c5, d5, e5 and f5 squares (this situation arises because White allows Black to trade a side pawn for a valuable White center pawn after 1.e4 c5 2.Nf3 d6 3.d4 cxd4. In fact, Grandmaster Bent Larsen once went so far as to call 3.d4 a mistake!). His play down the half-open c-file, possible queenside expansion with ...a6 followed by ...b5, pressure against White's e4-pawn and dreams of a successful ...d6-d5 advance will keep White on his toes for a long time.

Some typical sequences that lead to this kind of center are: **1.e4 c5 2.Nf3 d6 3.d4 cxd4 4.Nxd4 Nf6 5.Nc3 e6** (as seen in diagram 70), **1.e4 c5 2.Nf3 d6 3.d4 cxd4 4.Nxd4 Nf6 5.Nc3 a6 6.Bg5 e6** (known as the *Najdorf Variation*), **1.e4 c5 2.Nf3 d6 4.d4 cxd4 4.Nxd4 Nf6 5.Nc3 Nc6 6.Bg5 e6** (the *Richter-Rauzer Variation*), **1.e4 c5 2.Nf3 d6 4.d4 cxd4 4.Nxd4 Nf6 5.Nc3 Nc6 6.Bc4 e6** (the *Sozin Variation*).

2) Black places a pawn on d6 and leaves the e-pawn on e7 (he develops his dark-squared Bishop by ...g6 and ...Bg7).

(71)



(The dreaded *Dragon*)

This *Dragon* system places the dark-squared Bishop on the powerful g7-a1 diagonal. Its only flaws are the

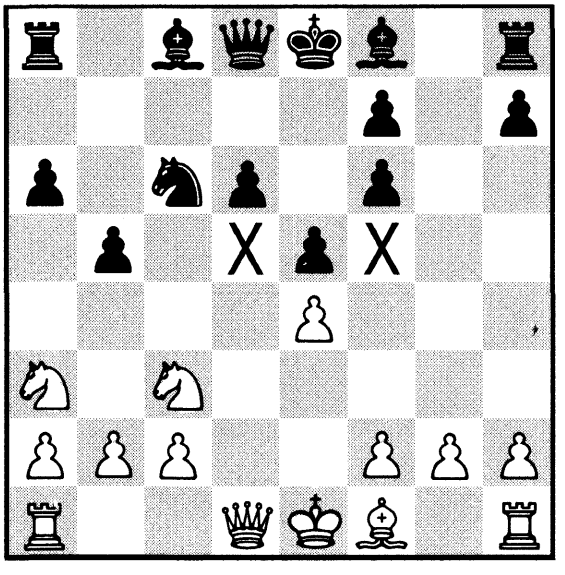
weakness of the d5-square, and the possibility of White opening a file with h4-h5xg6 (remember any pawn move in front of your King invites the opening of a file). Black must be on constant guard against Nc3-d5 by White. A capture on d5 might then lead to the opening of the e-file (after 1.e4 c5 2.Nf3 Nc6 3.d4 cxd4 4.Nxd4 g6 5.Nc3 Bg7 6.Be3 Nf6 7.Bc4 Qa5 8.0-0 0-0 9.Bb3 d6 10.h3 Bd7 11.Re1 Rac8 12.Nd5 Nxd5 13.exd5) and the creation of an attackable target on e7.

An attempt to make this square taboo by ...e7-e6 leaves d6 weak, since the dark-squared Bishop is on g7 and, as a result, is no longer defending this pawn from e7.

Another anti-*Dragon* system is the dreaded *Yugoslav Attack* (also known as the *St.George Attack*). White solidifies his central situation by f2-f3, castles queenside and then throws everything he has at the Black King (1.e4 c5 2.Nf3 d6 3.d4 cxd4 4.Nxd4 Nf6 5.Nc3 g6 6.Be3 Bg7 7.f3 0-0 8.Bc4 Nc6 9.Qd2 Bd7 10.0-0-0 Rc8 11.Bb3 Ne5 12.h4 Nc4 13.Bxc4 Rxc4 14.h5 Nxh5 15.g4 with a strong attack down the open h-file). Of course, these moves show that Black is building up his own attack on the queenside, and the resulting ultra-sharp battle can swing either way.

3) Black plays ...e7-e5 and ...d7-d6.

(72)



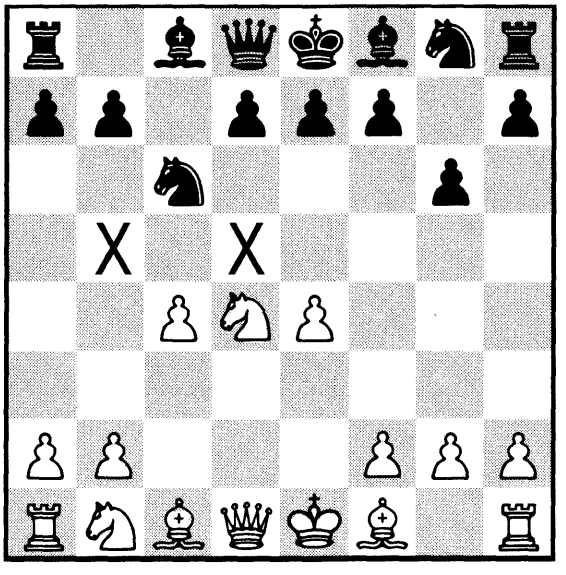
(Main line of the *Sveshnikov Variation*)

The *Pelikan* or *Sveshnikov* systems welcome a hole on d5 and even doubled f-pawns (with a potential hole on f5) in the hope that the imbalanced structure will lead to sharp play and subsequent winning chances (see diagram 72). One typical starting sequence is **1.e4 c5 2.Nf3 Nc6 3.d4 cxd4 4.Nxd4 Nf6 5.Nc3 e5 6.Ndb5 d6 7.Bg5 a6 8.Bxf6 gxf6 9.Na3 b5**. Black is hoping that his two Bishops, open g-file, ability to hit the White center with ...f6-f5, and the poor position of the White Knight on a3 will counterbalance the gaping wound on d5.

White dreams of getting his a3-Knight into the thick of battle by Nd5 and c2-c3, with Nc2-e3 to follow.

4) White creates a *Maroczy Bind* by playing c2-c4.

(73)



(The *Maroczy Bind*)

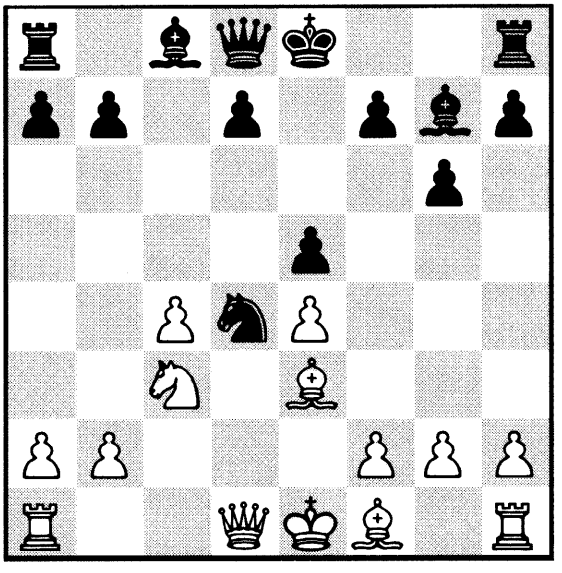
In the early 1900s the Hungarian Grandmaster Geza Maroczy realized that placing the White pawn on c4 added to his spatial plus and made enemy pawn advances to d5 or b5 rather difficult. At one time this strategy was thought to be very strong for White, but the last thirty years have shown various Black countermeasures to strike back at Maroczy's idea.

The most common sequence for a *Maroczy Bind* is **1.e4 c5 2.Nf3 Nc6 3.d4 cxd4 4.Nxd4 g6** Black usually

plays 4...Nf6 here, forcing White to block his c-pawn with 5.Nc3. **5.c4** when Black has the following schemes:

4.a) Domination of the d4-square by **5...Bg7 6.Be3 Nf6 7.Nc3 Ng4 8.Qxg4 Nxd4 9.Qd1 e5** (see diagram 74). This double-edged line has been "refuted" on many occasions, but reports of its death have always been exaggerated; the Black position turns out to be very resilient. Theoretically, White can't obtain more than a small edge thanks to his own control over the d5-square.

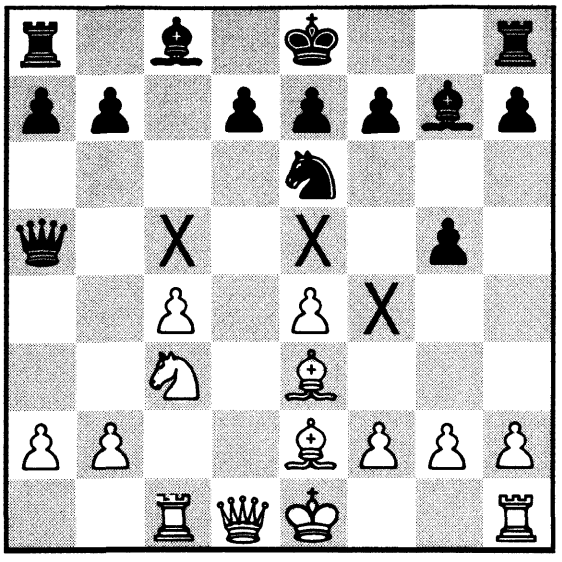
(74)



(Fighting for control over the d4-square)

4.b) Dark-square strategy initiated by **5...Bg7 6.Be3 Nf6 7.Nc3 Ng4 8.Qxg4 Nxd4 9.Qd1 Ne6 10.Rc1** and now Black can play quietly with **10...d6**, he can try a slightly more aggressive stance with **10...b6** followed by 11...Bb7, or he can go for the gusto with **10...Qa5 11.Be2 g5!?**, creating an artificial support point on e5 (see diagram 75).

(75)

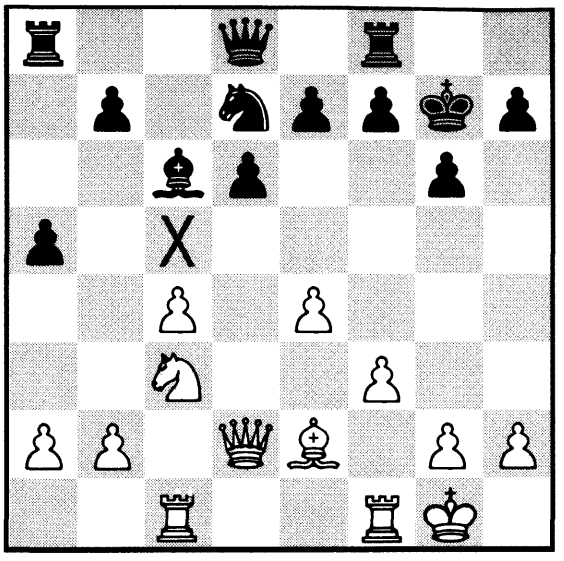


(Advanced form of dark-squared control)

This position offers Black control over the c5, e5 and f4 squares (the pawn on g5 stops White's f-pawn from moving to f4 which would deprive Black of the use of e5).

4.c) Creation of a support point on c5 by **5...Bg7 6.Be3 Nf6 7.Nc3 d6 8.Be2 0-0 9.0-0 Bd7 10.Qd2 Nxd4 11.Bxd4 Bc6 12.f3 Nd7** when **13.Bxg7 Kxg7** allows Black to grab the c5-square (and the dark-squares around it) by ...a5 (stopping the White b-pawn from advancing to b4), ...Qb6 and ...Nc5 (see diagram 76). For this reason, White does best to retain the d4-Bishop by **13.Be3!** when he keeps some measure of dark-square control.

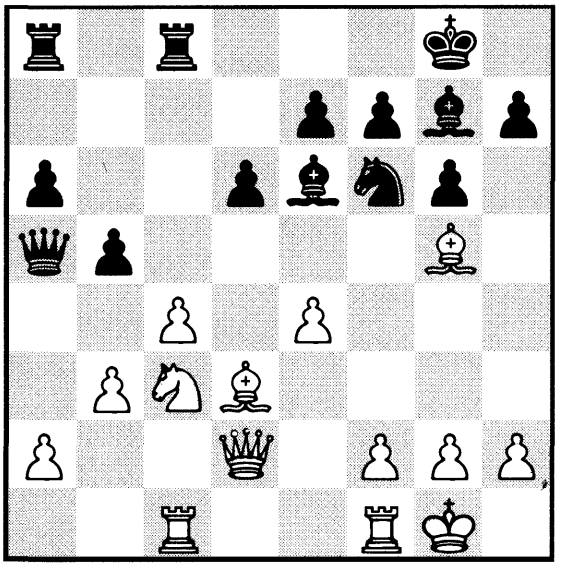
(76)



(Creation of an artificial support point on c5)

4.d) Black gains some time by drawing the White Queen to the center (the exchange of Knights on d4 also relieves a bit of Black's cramp), and then plays for a ...b7-b5 advance and queenside counterplay: **5...Nf6 6.Nc3 d6 7.Be2** Bad is 7.Be3? Ng4! **7...Nxd4 8.Qxd4 Bg7 9.Bg5 0-0 10.Qd2 Be6 11.0-0 Qa5 12.Rac1 a6 13.Bd3 Rfc8 14.b3 b5!** with equality (see diagram 77).

(77)



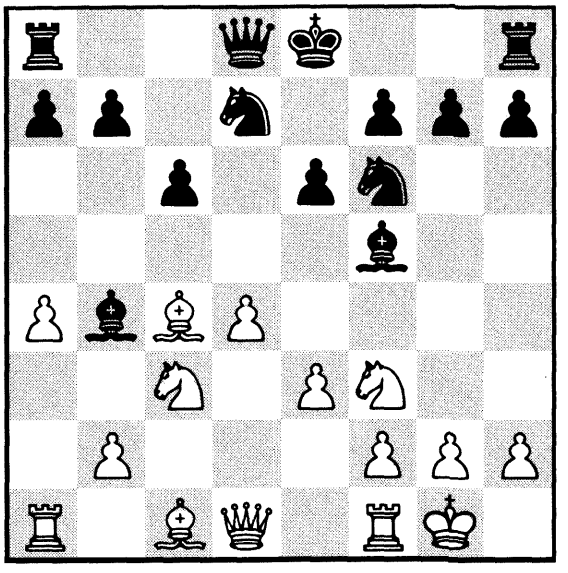
(Black's ...b7-b5 break)

Slav Defense

This opening is very popular among the world's leading Grandmasters. The reason for this is simple: it's one of those rare systems that contains a harmonious mix of solidity and dynamism.

After **1.d4 d5 2.c4 c6** Black supports his d-pawn without blocking his c8-Bishop. The main line runs as follows: **3.Nf3 Nf6 4.Nc3 dxc4 5.a4** This stops Black from holding onto his pawn with b7-b5, but it also leaves a big hole on the b4-square. This hole will later become an important part of Black's strategy. **5...Bf5 6.e3 e6 7.Bxc4 Bb4 8.0-0 Nbd7**

(78)



(Main line *Slav*)

This position offers both sides many opportunities. White will play to expand in the center with e3-e4 (making use of his extra center pawn) or, if this doesn't appeal to him, he will play for the two Bishops by Nh4.

Black will castle, fight to retain control over the b4-square, and then strike in the center with an eventual ...c6-c5 or ...e6-e5 advance. On **9.Nh4** Black can retreat his Bishop to g6, he can move it to g4, or he can simply leave it on f5 by **9...0-0**, when **10.Nxf5 exf5** gives Black more control over the important e4-square.

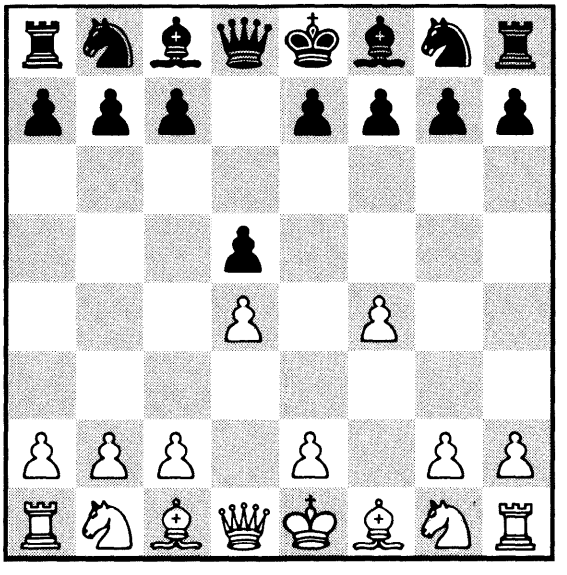
These ideas, and more advanced ones that I haven't mentioned, make this opening very rich. In general, the richer an opening is (meaning that it's full of ideas and possibilities), the more popular it will be with strong players.

Stonewall Attack

Many players who employ the *Dutch Defense* (*Stonewall Variation*) via 1.d4 f5 think that the perfect way to cut down on their study time as White is to reverse that opening with 1.d4 d5 (or 1...Nf6) 2.f4. There are two problems with this logic:

1) After **1.d4 Nf6 2.f4** Black can play for a quick ...e7-e5: **2...g6 3.Nf3 Bg7 4.e3 0-0 5.Bd3 d6 6.0-0 Nc6 7.c3** This is the formation that White envisioned with 2.f4. Unfortunately, Black can now play **7...e5!** and get a great position since **8.fxe5 dxe5 9.dxe5 Ng4** regains the pawn with advantage. This means that the *Stonewall Attack* isn't sound if Black can play for a quick ...e7-e5 advance.

(79)



(The *Stonewall Attack*)

2) After **1.d4 d5 2.f4** Black can try **2...Nf6 3.e3 Bf5** Clamping down on the weak e4-square. **4.Nf3 e6** when the second player already enjoys a comfortable game.

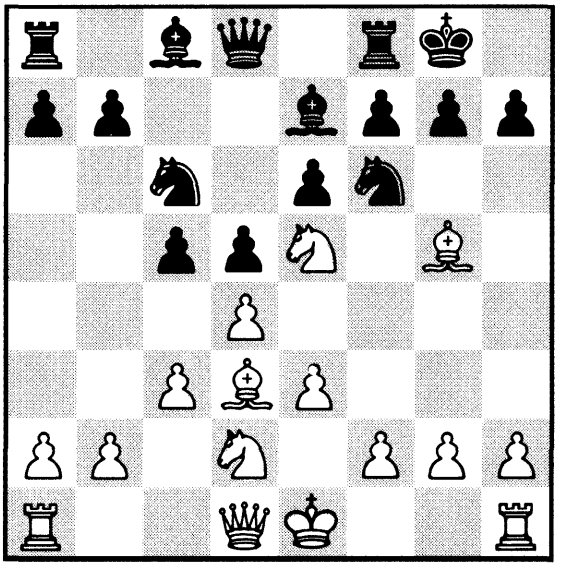
It's clear that the early creation of a hole on e4 makes the *Stonewall Attack* a rather nebulous proposition.

Torre Attack

A favorite of amateurs everywhere, and also a great favorite of the late World Champion Tigran Petrosian, this system tends to be relatively easy to play while still containing quite a bit of poison.

After **1.d4 Nf6 2.Nf3 e6 3.Bg5 d5** Black can also consider 3...h6 or 3...c5 **4.e3 Be7 5.Nbd2 c5 6.c3 0-0 7.Bd3 Nc6** Threatening ...Qc7 followed by ...e5. White must not allow this to happen! White now plays the key move of the whole variation: **8.Ne5!**

(80)



(Key position of *Torre Attack*)

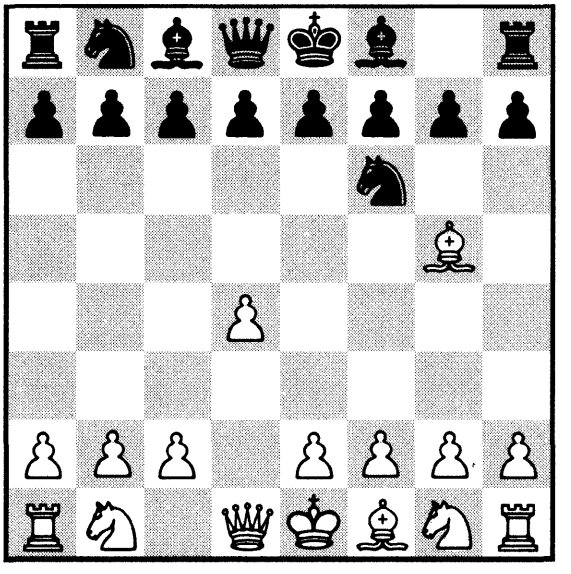
White intends to clamp down on the e5-square with f2-f4. This would give him an excellent attacking game on the kingside. If Black replies with **8...Nxe5 9.dxe5 Nd7** White does best to retain Bishops (the side with more space should avoid exchanges) by **10.Bf4**. Play might then go as follows: **10...f5** Trying to block the d3-Bishop's diagonal and, in some lines, threatening ...g7-g5. **11.h4!** Stopping ...g7-g5 and intending to answer 11...Bxh4 with the rude 12.Qh5. **11...c4 12.Bc2 Nc5 13.Nf3** and White's control over the d4-square and his chances against the Black King (an eventual g2-g4 will open up the g-file) overshadow Black's counterplay on the queenside.

Trompowski Opening

Dynamic players who long for original positions found a friend when they discovered the *Trompowski!* On move two (!) White avoids most modern theory and begins to blaze new, interesting trails

After **1.d4 Nf6 2.Bg5** White threatens to double Black's pawns. Black must decide whether to allow this threat to happen (moves like 2...d5 or 2...c5 are quite playable), to seek high adventure with **2...Ne4**, or to prevent it with the quiet **2...e6** Which allows White to build a pawn center with 3.e2-e4. In that case, **3.e4 h6 4.Bxf6 Qxf6** leads to a position where White's spatial plus directly challenges Black's possession of the two Bishops.

(71)



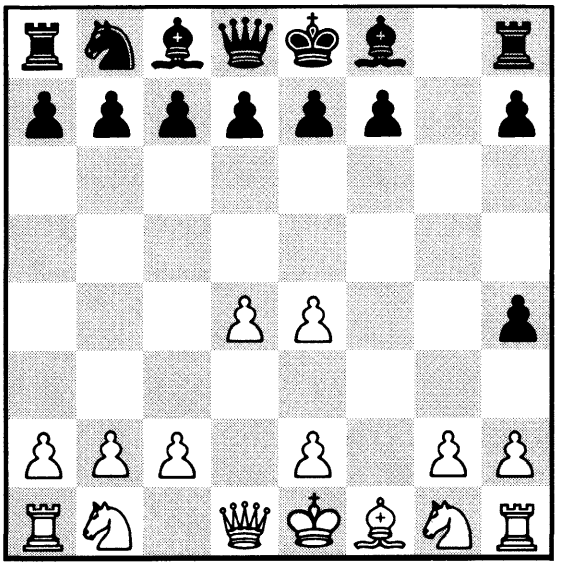
(The crazed *Trompowski Opening*)

Though White will be playing for a nice pawn center, doubled Black pawns and dynamic piece play, Black can try and take advantage of the early development of White's Bishop (which, by its absence from c1, has left the b2-pawn unprotected).

His most challenging response is the Knight hop by **2...Ne4**. One fascinating possibility is **3.Bh4** 3.Bf4 has recently become more popular. **3...g5!?** The quiet 3...d5 also makes sense. **4.f3**

gxh4 5.fxe4 with an extremely odd position: White has a nice center but he is also weak on the dark squares due to the loss of his dark-squared Bishop (Black should try and take advantage of this by 5...c5, threatening to attack both d4 and b2 with ...Qb6).

(82)



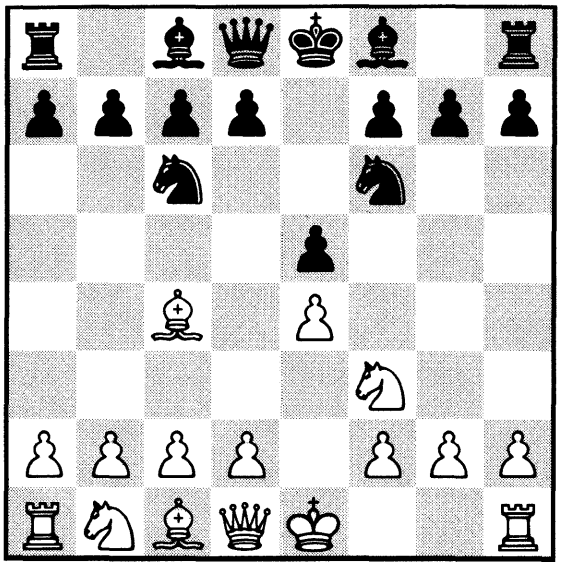
(A typically bizarre *Trompowski* position)

As for the bizarre pawn structure, the doubling of the e-pawns has left White with an open f-file for his Rooks (though he's not in a position to use it at the moment due to his lack of development. At some point, however, he would like to play e2-e3, Bc4, Nf3 and 0-0 with a very strong attack). The doubled Black h-pawns (the one on h4 is particularly weak) have given Black an open g-file, but I don't see this as a very important factor since Black should be playing to use his f8-Bishop (on g7 or h6); a kingside attack doesn't strike me as a viable Black plan.

Two Knights Defense

After **1.e4 e5 2.Nf3 Nc6 3.Bc4** Black sometimes avoids the *Giuoco Piano* (3...Bc5) and opts to attack the e4-pawn immediately with **3...Nf6**

(83)



(The *Two Knights Defense)*

This attack against e4 forces White's hand and gives him the following options:

1) White can defend e4 with the boring **4.Nc3**. Though this is solid, White no longer has the option of c2-c3, taking control over the d4-square. Black would then develop and take control of d4 with **4...Bc5**, giving him a completely even game.

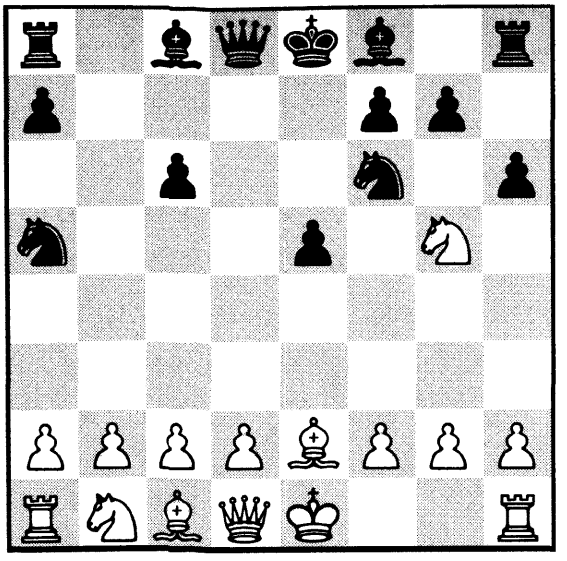
2) White can defend e4 with **4.d3**. This leads to an interesting positional battle (usually transposing into a quiet version of the *Giuoco Piano*). White will play c2-c3 and eventually aim to build a big center with d3-d4. Black will have no trouble developing his pieces to active squares (4...Bc5 followed by 5...d6, 6...Nf6 and 7...0-0) and can count on a hard game with chances for both sides (look at the section on the *Ruy Lopez* or the *Giuoco Piano* for an

example of the strong point strategy that Black will employ).

3) White starts an immediate central war with **4.d4!?**. The complications that result from **4...exd4 5.0-0** Also interesting is 5.e5. **5...Bc5 6.e5 d5 7.exf6 dxc4** (known as the *Max Lange Attack*) were first analyzed in 1854. A lot of memorization is necessary to handle the many tactical lines in a successful manner.

4) White tries to refute Black's Knight move with the primitive but annoying **4.Ng5**, starting an immediate attack against f7. White is wasting time in an effort to knock his opponent out, and Black does best to play for a lead in development by **4...d5** The ultra complicated 4...Bc5!? 5.Bxf7+ Ke7, known as the *Wilkes-Barre Variation*, doesn't have a good reputation, but it may prove suitable to those who enjoy memorizing pages and pages of analysis. **5.exd5 Na5!** Giving up a pawn for a further gain of time is the best way to go. Very risky is 5...Nxd5 6.Nxf7! (preparing this sacrifice with 6.d4 might be even stronger) Kxf7 7.Qf3+ Ke6 when Black's King won't feel safe for a long time to come. This sacrificial line is known as the *Fried Liver Attack*. **6.Bb5+ c6 7.dxc6 bxc6 8.Be2 h6** when Black's lead in development and spatial plus give him adequate compensation for the sacrificed pawn.

(84)



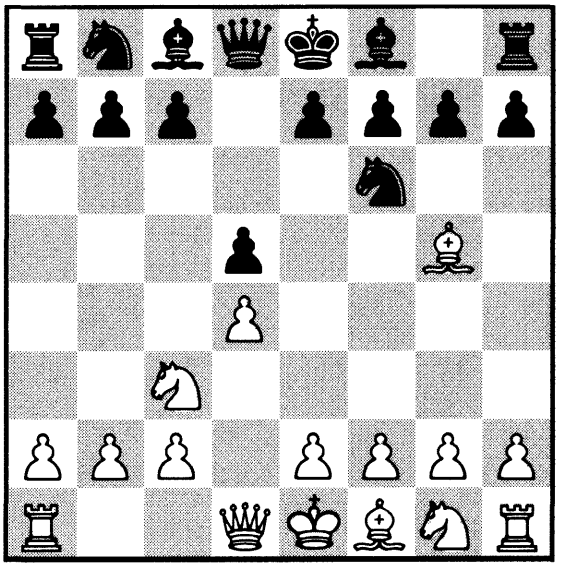
(Development vs. White's extra pawn)

White, of course, will try hard to bring his King to a safe place and to bring out the rest of his army (if he succeeds in doing this, his extra pawn may eventually tell in his favor). Black will play actively and try to make use of the many open files and diagonals.

Veresov Opening

The *Veresov* is a rarely seen opening that appeals to aggressive players who want to get their opponents away from mainstream theory. Less anti-positional (White's Knight blocks his c-pawn after **1.d4 d5 2.Nc3 Nf6 3.Bg5**) than it might seem at first glance, it gives White a choice of lines that allow him to play either quietly or viciously, depending on what mood strikes him.

(85)



(Beginning position of the *Veresov*)

In general, White plays to give Black doubled pawns or, if Black prevents that from happening, White tries to build a big pawn center. Black, of course, should nip White's plans in the bud with a central counter strike of his own.

Though Black has many ways to meet this opening, the main line is generally regarded as: **3...Nbd7** This stops White from doubling the f-pawns. Black could also transpose into the *French Defense* after 3...e6 4.e4. **4.f3** Preparing to build a big center. Quieter continuations are 4.e3 and 4.Nf3. Now both **4...c5!?** and **4... c6 5.e4 dxe4 6.fxe4 e5** This central counterattack frees Black's pieces and stops White from taking more than his share of central space. **7.dxe5 Qa5!** lead to great complications and chances for both sides.

PREPARATION

In this modern day of huge computer databases, in-depth opening preparation is becoming more and more crucial for players wanting success at the higher levels of the game.

However, non-masters can do very well for themselves by creating opening repertories based on ideas and simple positional considerations. This, plus the inevitable experience one gains from the constant employment of these systems, will serve you in good stead even against the strongest adversaries.

The first step in creating such a repertoire is to understand that memorization comes in a distant second to an appreciation of the ideas behind your opening moves. This way, an opponent who deviates from prescribed book lines won't throw you for a loop because you will continue to play moves based on the needs of the position.

One excellent way to create a good repertoire is to make use of lines that are similar in structure and content. For example, as Black versus **1.d4**, you might wish to make use of the *Slav Defense* (**1...d5 2.c4 c6**). Having versed yourself in the *Slav*, you would want to answer **1.e4** with the *Caro-Kann* (**1...c6 2.d4 d5**). This will create a structure that you are comfortable with. Using this same logic, the *English Opening* can be met by **1.c4 c6 2.Nc3 d5** when **3.d4** leads you back to the well-known streets of your *Slav Defense*.

Having decided on your system(s), find a book(s) on them that verbally explains the whys and hows of your desired setups. DON'T attempt to memorize all the lines! Instead, learn the basics, play as many practice games as possible (even five minute games will prove useful), and then immediately look up the line just employed to see where you (or your opponent) went wrong.

Only direct experience with a variation will enable you to understand and remember a series of moves that had once seemed random.

This kind of preparation cuts down on study time and will create a firm line of defense that will remain with you throughout your chess career.

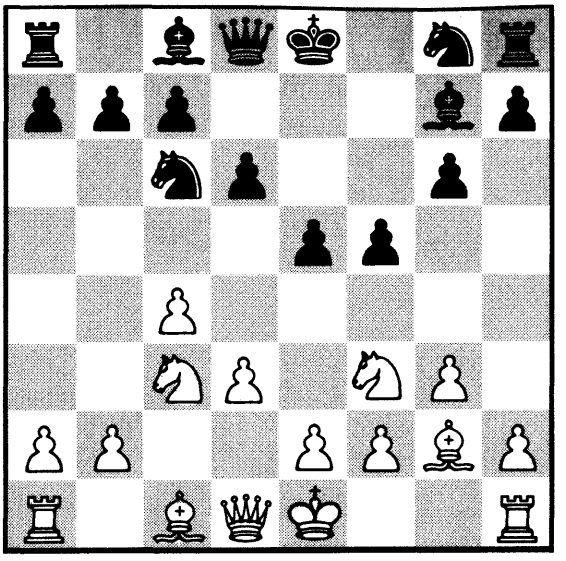
REVERSED OPENINGS

Some players enjoy playing White openings with the Black pieces (which leaves you with a tempo less) or Black openings with the White pieces (which leaves you with a tempo more). The *English Opening* (**1.c4**) becomes a reversed *Sicilian* (with a tempo more for White and a tempo less for Black) after **1...e5**, **1.e3 e5** is a reversed *French Defense*, **1.Nf3 d5 2.g3 c5 3.Bg2 Nc6 4.0-0 e5** is a reversed *King's Indian Defense*, **1.Nf3 d5 2.g3 c5 3.Bg2 Nc6 4.d4** is a reversed *Grünfeld*, and the list can go on and on.

One reason to play a reversed opening is to steer the game into positions that you understand. For example, if you have mastered the *King's Indian Defense* against 1.d4, why not play the same positions as White and make use of your knowledge and experience?

To explore the philosophy of reversed openings in a deeper way, lets take a look at one and address its problems: After **1.c4 e5 2.Nc3 Nc6 3.g3 g6 4.Bg2 Bg7 5.d3 d6 6.Nf3 f5** we reach a popular position among players who are trying to win with the Black pieces (see diagram 86).

(86)



(*English Opening* that is actually a reversed *Closed Sicilian*)

The position in the diagram is a well-known *Sicilian* position (known as the *Closed Sicilian*) with colors reversed. In the *Closed Sicilian*, White usually reaches the Black position here after **1.e4 c5 2.Nc3 Nc6 3.g3 g6 4.Bg2 Bg7 5.d3 d6 6.f4 Nf6 7.Nf3**. Though Spassky was successful with this opening many years ago, nowadays the whole White setup is considered to be rather insipid. Now we come to a strange thought. In the *English Opening*, Black plays this same position with a full tempo less (as the diagram shows) and tends to get excellent results! Why would a line that gives White nothing with an extra move be fine for Black, who is a move behind?

This doesn't make sense, does it? The answer, I believe, comes in two parts. First, the position after **1.e4 c5 2.Nc3 Nc6 3.g3 g6 4.Bg2 Bg7 5.d3 d6 6.f4 Nf6 7.Nf3** actually did give White many fine victories. The reason the *Closed Sicilian* lost its bite is that Black discovered a superior setup: **1.e4 c5 2.Nc3 Nc6 3.g3 g6 4.Bg2 Bg7 5.d3 d6 6.f4** and now best, instead of 6...Nf6, is **6...e6!** followed by 7...Nge7. This new positioning of the Black Knight allows him to stop White's eventual f4-f5 advance (very important for White if he wants a successful kingside attack) with a well-timed ...f7-f5. This Knight can also help fight for the critical d4-square by joining its brother with ...Nd4 and ...Nec6.

What this means is that, in our *English* position, White has been tricked into adopting the "inferior" f3-square for his King Knight. This means that Black will be able to get in his ...f5-f4 advance and, as a result, will get reasonable chances against the White King.

The other reason that Black likes this system (while White, playing the same position with a tempo more in the *Sicilian*, finds it unacceptable) is a bit more abstract. Basically, an opening that only leads to equality is not anything for White to crow about. However, if you use that same opening with the Black pieces and achieve that same equality, you should be absolutely delighted!

OPENING QUIZZES

Answers to Opening Quizzes can be found on pages 351-354.

1) True or false: One of Black's main ideas in the *Caro-Kann Defense* is to advance his f-pawn to f5 and start a kingside attack.

2) True or false: The point of the opening phase of the game is to develop your pieces as quickly as possible. Once this is done, assess the situation and look for a middlegame plan.

3) True or false: Quick development is not as important in closed positions as it is in opened ones.

4) True or false: You need a great memory if you intend to become proficient in any opening system.

5) True or false: Huge opening databases have become extremely important in the world of professional opening preparation. In fact, they have become a necessity for any player wishing to compete in tournaments.

6) True or false: In Queen-pawn openings it is usually advisable to avoid blocking the c-pawns with a Knight.

7) True or false: When both sides' pawns block the center, try to find a way to remove these pawns so that your Rooks can get into the game.

8) True or false: Openings that lead to the possession of weak pawns or weak squares should always be avoided.

9) True or false: In general, playing to control the center with your pieces and pawns is great opening strategy.

10) True or false: White should not let Black double his pawns in the *Nimzo-Indian Defense.*

11) True or false: In the *Ruy Lopez*, White's b1-Knight usually takes at least three moves to reach its ideal location.

12) True or false: *Alekhine's Defense* allows White to build up a big pawn center in the hope of proving it to be a target instead of a strength.

13) True or false: The *Torre Attack* is a Black system of development where the second player tries to create chances against the White King.

14) True or false: The *Petroff Defense* and the *Russian Game* are two names for the same opening.

15) True or false: Only people with simian intelligence play the *Orangutan*, that's how it got its name.

16) True or false: *Metger's Unpin* is a technique where one Knight helps you break a Bishop pin against another Knight.

17) True or false: The *Colle Opening* was first created when Hector Camacho's pet collie knocked over a pawn with its paw, thus giving its owner the idea for this system.

18) True or false: *Capablanca's Freeing Maneuver* is a way for Black to get more room for his pieces in the *Queen's Gambit Declined.*

19) True or false: The *Trompowski Opening* appears on the board after White's sixth move.

20) True or false: Gambits may offer cheap thrills, but they can never be recommended.

PART TWO

THE MIDDLE-GAME

Grandmaster Tarrasch once said, "Before the endgame the Gods have placed the middlegame."

This is the phase of the game where beautiful kingside attacks are created, subtle strategic plans are put into motion and preparations for the endgame are quietly (sometimes secretly) begun.

Many games don't get past the middlegame. A checkmate ends matters in no uncertain terms, huge material losses convince experienced players to resign the contest in disgust, and the specter of a lost endgame can also lead a player to tip his King over in a gesture of defeat.

Since the middlegame is where a player gets to demonstrate the bulk of his knowledge and understanding of chess, this section is the most important in the book. The material here deserves close study; whenever you feel that a middlegame concept is vague or only lightly understood, turn to the appropriate section for a quick answer and, hopefully, a quick improvement in your results.

ATTACK AGAINST THE ENEMY KING

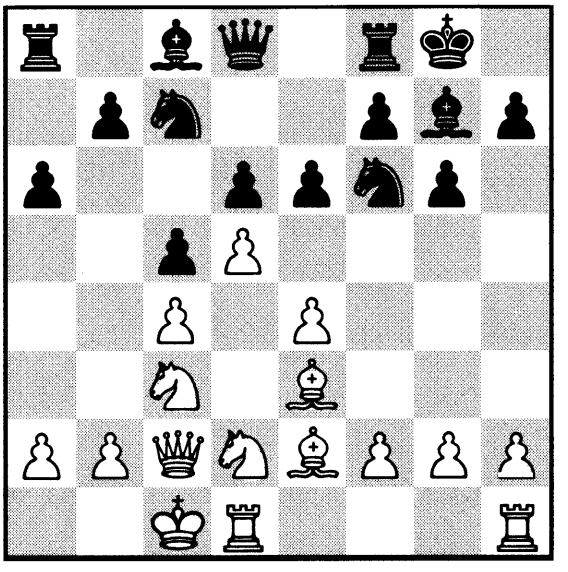
Attacking an enemy King is not something you just decide to do; you must have sufficient strategic justification. Yes, I know that everyone loves to launch kingside attacks. Everyone dreams of dragging the enemy monarch down with a series of brilliant sacrifices. But, unfortunately, desire and personal inclination must take a back seat to logic and the ability to read the board correctly.

The following attacking concepts should be thoroughly understood before you start to bop hostile Kings on the head. If favorable versions of these things don't exist, then your hoped-for attack is nothing more than an illusion.

Castling on Opposite Sides

When Kings are castled on opposite sides of the board, this usually signals the start of aggressive action by both players against the opposing monarch.

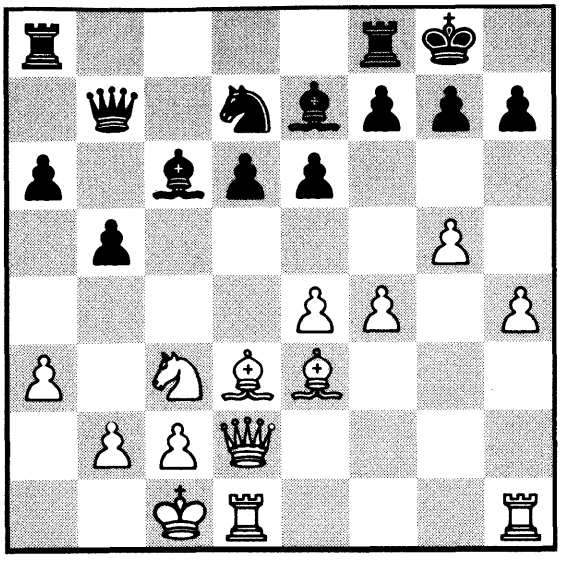
(87)



(White will play on the kingside, Black on the queenside)

In general, both sides will start their attacks with pawns (in diagram 87, White will open kingside files with h4-h5, Black will do so with ...b7-b5). This allows them to gain space and open files for their Rooks. Naturally, such sharp positions require energetic play. The initiative becomes very important here; the sacrifice of a pawn or two to place the opponent on the defensive is a no-brainer for the experienced master.

(88)



(Whoever strikes first will be well on his way to victory)

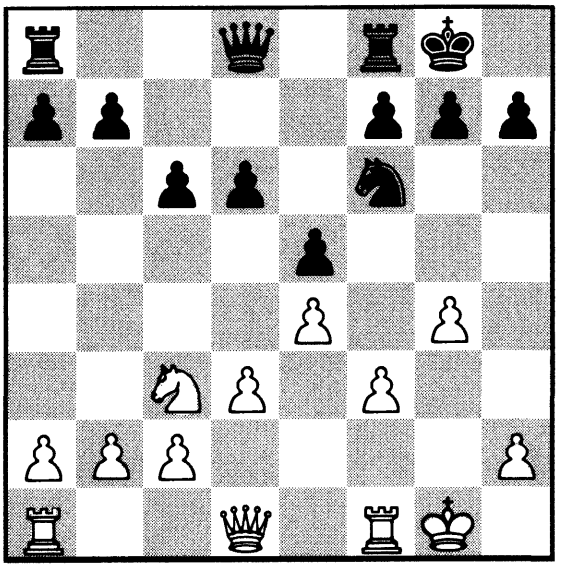
In diagram 88 Black threatens to get his attack rolling with ...b5-b4, opening up queenside files. However White, who has the move, will strike first with **1.g6! hxg6 2.h5** when Black is placed in the unsavory role of defender.

The Art of Attack by Keres and Kotov (a classic little book) gives a fine discussion of opposite side castling.

Castling on the Same Side

When both players have castled on the same side of the board, pushing pawns on that side would weaken one's own King (though such pawn attacks are still seen from time to time).

(89)

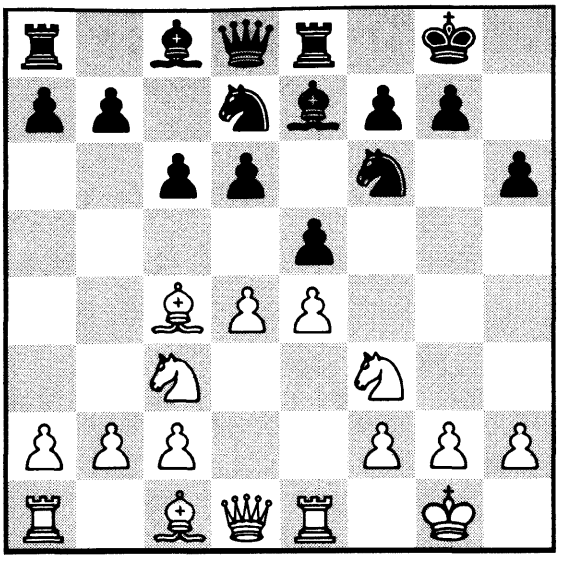


(White's g2-g4 did more damage to his King than to his opponent's)

Because of this fact, an attack with pieces is the normal way to begin a kingside assault. Of course, before you begin such an attack, you have to ask what justification you have in doing so:

1) Is the center wide-open or in a state of flux? If so, a wing attack has little chance for success.

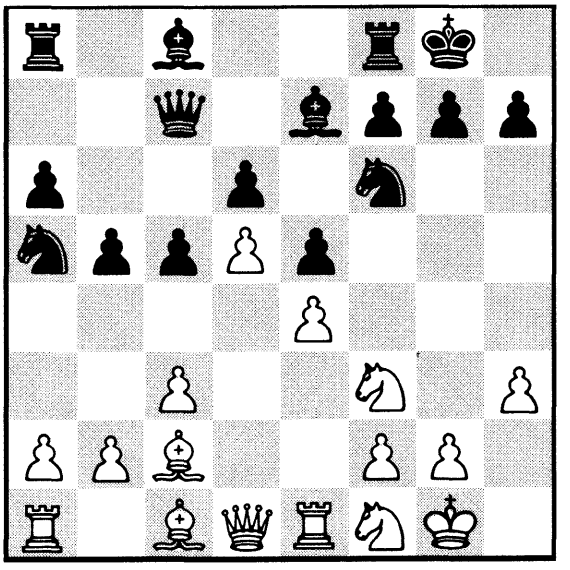
(90)



(Both sides should be playing in the center, not on the wings!)

2) If you have control of the center or if the center is closed, a pawn storm might become possible, even if you have to push the pawns directly in front of your own King.

(91)



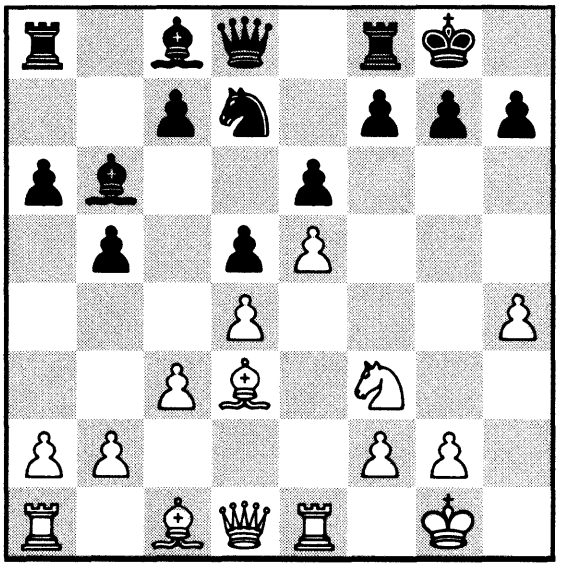
(The center is closed so 1.g4 is perfectly acceptable)

Classic Bishop Sacrifice

This sacrificial idea was first recorded in *Greco's Handbook* (published in 1619. Since that time, it has been played thousands of times and is now an important (but elementary) part of every tournament player's chess weaponry.

The basic premise is well illustrated in the following diagram.

(92)



(White to play and have fun)

White forces the Black King out of its nest with the surprising **1.Bxh7+! Kxh7 2.Ng5+ Kg8** On 2...Kg6 3.h5+ is decisive. **3.Qh5** Black is unable to prevent checkmate or loss of his Queen: **3...Re8** (best was 3...Qxg5, though 4.Bxg5 leaves him too far behind in material) **4.Qxf7+ Kh8 5.Qh5+ Kg8 6.Qh7+ Kf8 7.Qh8+ Ke7 8.Qxg7 mate**

Note the following factors that make the sacrifice viable:

1) A White Bishop on the b1-h7 diagonal is ready to sacrifice itself for the good of the White masses.

2) A White Knight on f3 is ready to jump to g5 and begin the hunt for the exposed Black King.

3) A White Queen on d1 is ready to follow behind the Knight with a leap to g4 or h5.

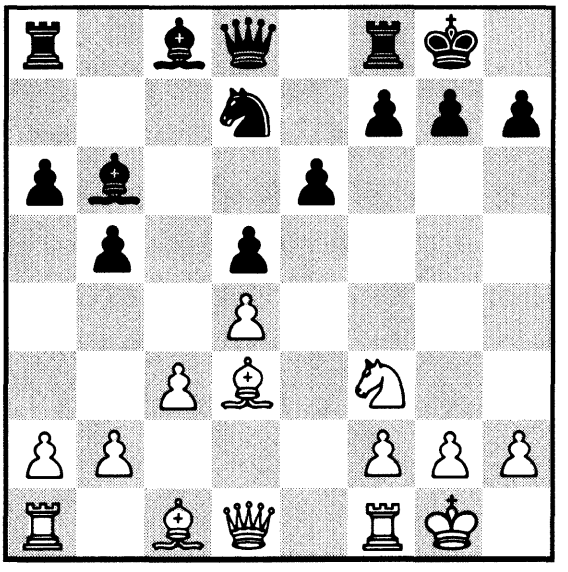
4) White's dark-squared Bishop on c1 keeps an eye on the g5-square and allows the f3-Knight to safely land there. Also note that this Bishop makes h6 an inhospitable place for the Black King to run to.

5) White's pawn on e5 keeps Black defenders (and Black's King) off of f6.

If all these factors exist, then your Bishop sacrifice has an excellent chance for success. However, the sacrifice is dubious if Black has one of the following defensive ideas available to him:

1) A Black Knight can safely move to f6 or f8.

(93)

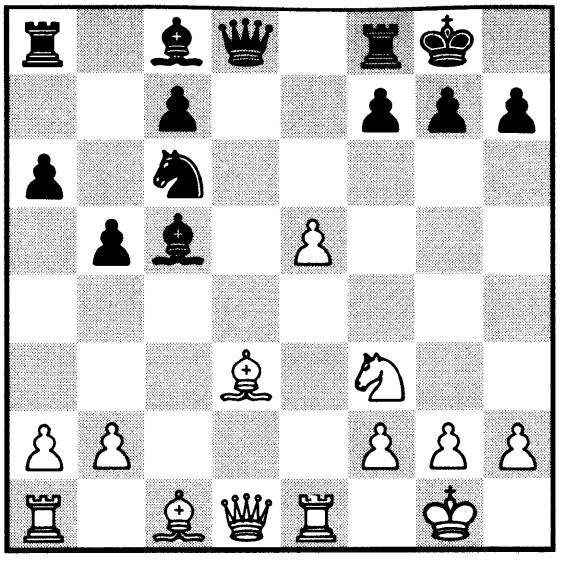


(The sacrifice is unsound in this position)

The tempting **1.Bxh7+?** now fails to **1...Kxh7 2.Ng5+ Kg8 3.Qh5 Nf6** when the h7-square is well defended.

2) Black's Bishop or Queen has access to the b1-h7 diagonal.

(94)



(The sacrifice is once again doomed to failure)

White gets nowhere with **1.Bxh7+ Kxh7 2.Ng5+ Kg8 3.Qh5** due to both 3...Bf5 and 3...Qd3.

It should be clear that this sacrifice usually won't work if the defender can defend the h7-square.

If you are interested in delving deeper into this subject, a wonderful discussion of the classic Bishop sacrifice can be found in Vukovic's *The Art of Attack in Chess.*

Combination

A COMBINATION is a SACRIFICE combined with a forced sequence of moves that exploits specific peculiarities of the position in the hope of attaining a certain goal.

Unfortunately, knowing what a combination is doesn't make it any easier to spot them or to understand what makes them work.

Everyone loves to play pretty combinations. However, though it's easy to figure out solutions in books that say, "White to play and mate in two," in actual game situations these delicious opportunities often go unnoticed.

Certainly, a working knowledge of the basic tactical themes and basic mating patterns is of critical importance; but a few simple rules will go a long way in telling you whether you should or should not look for a combination.

Combinations can only exist if:

1) The enemy King is vulnerable (loss of pawn cover/centrally placed).

2) The enemy King is stalemated.

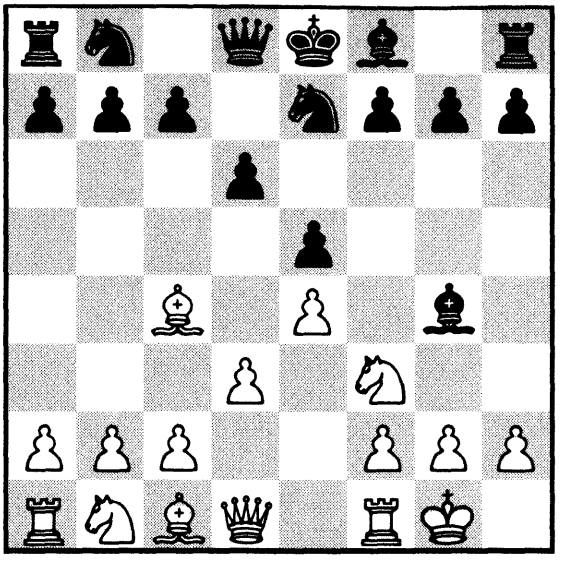
3) Enemy pieces (not pawns) are undefended.

4) Enemy pieces (not pawns) are inadequately defended.

Though these four "laws of combination" are mine, I will add another rule (from Grandmaster Yuri Averbakh) that might also prove useful: "All combinations are based on some form of double attack."

If you notice one or more of these factors on the board, you have grounds to look for a combination. If none of these factors are present, don't bother wasting your time searching for something that has no scientific right to exist.

(95)



(White has two ways to win)

White can win material by taking advantage of Black's undefended Bishop on g4 (rule #3) and the fact that the Black King is none too safe in the center (rule #1).

White can win a clean pawn by **1.Bxf7+! Kxf7 2.Ng5+** Creating a double attack against the Black King and the g4-Bishop. **2...Kg8 3.Qxg4**.

The other solution is **1.Nxe5!** Creating a double attack against the undefended g4-Bishop and the loosely protected f7-pawn. **1...Bxd1??** Black had to play either 1...dxe5 2.Qxg4 or 1...Be6 when 2.Bxe6 fxe6 3.Nf3. In both cases White would have an extra pawn. **2.Bxf7 mate**.

See Combination Themes, page 121 for a list of recommended books on this subject.

Combination Themes

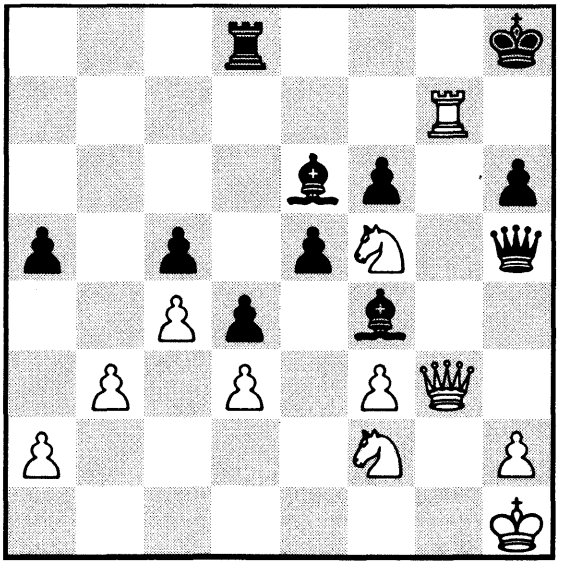
The following themes form the basis for all combinative and tactical operations. A thorough knowledge of them is not just recommended, it's imperative!

There are many fine books on this subject, and all of them will help you make an in-depth study of tactics and combinations My favorites are: *Chess Tactics For Advanced Players* by Averbakh, *Chess Combinations as Fine Art* by Golz and Keres, *Winning Chess Tactics* by Seirawan and Silman.

Clearance Sacrifice

At times you may be itching to play a very powerful move that, unfortunately, isn't possible due to the fact that one of your own pieces is in the way. The solution here is to clear the way by sacrificing the blocking, traitorous piece.

(96)



(A CLEARANCE SACRIFICE gives Black a dose of reality)

White appears to be in trouble. His Queen is under attack and his f5 Knight is hanging in two different ways. Is it time for White

to panic? The answer is no if White notices that Qg7 mate would be possible if the Rook wasn't on g7.

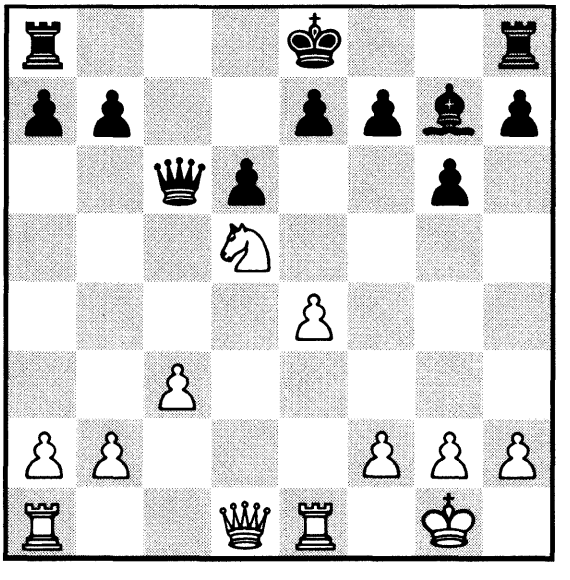
How can you get the Rook away from g7 without giving Black time to recover? 1.Rg8+?? loses to 1...Rxg8 while 1.Re7 Bxg3 is just as hopeless. Since 1.Qg4 Qxg4 2.fxg4 Bxf5 loses for White (the g7-Rook is without a defender), he has to find something sharp and shocking. The answer is **1.Rh7+!** clearing the g7-square for the White Queen with gain of time. After **1...Kxh7 2.Qg7** is mate.

From now on, if you think that something is impossible because one of your own pieces is in the way, cheer up and look for a clearance sacrifice—you'll be glad you did!

Decoy

DECOY sacrifices force enemy pieces to squares that they would prefer not to occupy. At times this involves pulling a piece to a square where it will meet its doom; at other times the decoy pulls a key defensive unit away from its duties which, in turn, causes the defender's whole position to collapse.

(97)

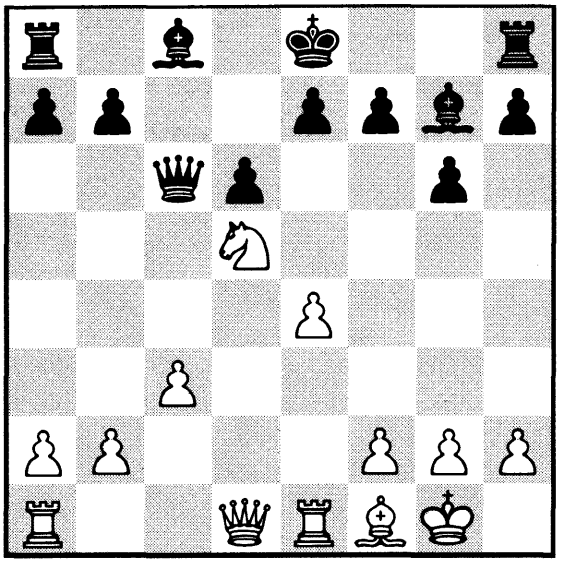


(Black to move and self-destruct)

Black would never consider playing 1...Qb5?? because 2.Nc7+ would fork the enemy King and Queen (not to mention the Rook!) and win a decisive amount of material.

However, in diagram 98 we can force Black to step within range of our Knight by using a clever pinning/decoy sacrifice.

(98)

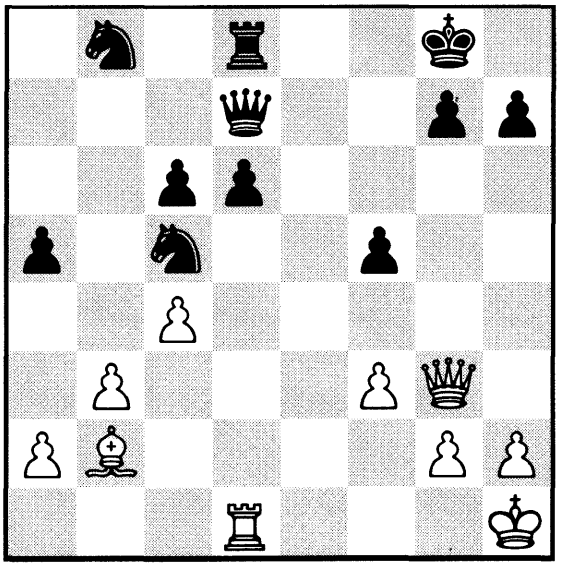


(White to move and win)

The decoy **1.Bb5!** pins the Black Queen and forces it to step to a square that we already labeled as suicidal. After **1...Qxb5 2.Nc7+** Black's Queen is lost and the game can be resigned.

As mentioned above, other decoys revolve around pieces that are overworked as defenders. Our next diagram gives us a nice example of this.

(99)



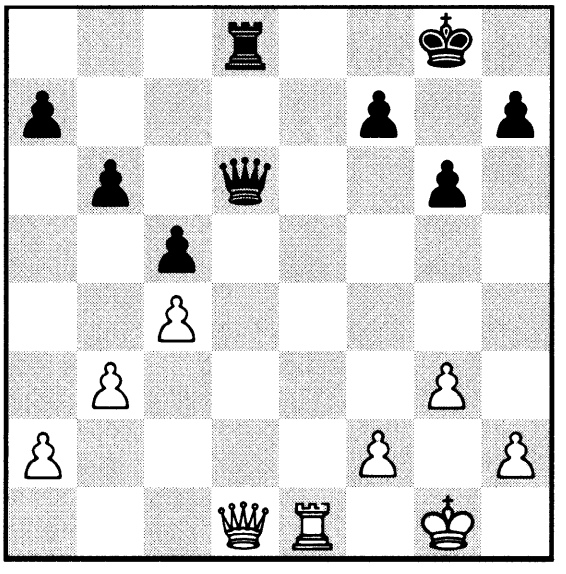
(Black's Queen defends d6, d8 and g7)

Diagram 99 shows us a case of an overworked Black Queen. The poor thing not only defends d6 and d8, it also defends the key pawn on g7. The decoy move **1.Rxd6!** takes advantage of these facts by offering the Rook in an effort to pull the Queen away from the defense of g7. This wins right away since **1...Qxd6 2.Qxg7 mate** has a victorious air about it, while 1...Qe7 2.Rxd8+ **Qxd8 3.Qxg7 mate** is more of the same thing.

Deflection

Quite often a defender manages to hold life and limb together with one brave piece. To break down this kind of heroic defensive posture, the attacker needs to chase away this key unit. At times, the displacement of this one critical piece can completely ruin the defender's game and reduce his position to ashes. Pulling this kind of defensive piece away from its duties is what deflection is all about.

(100)



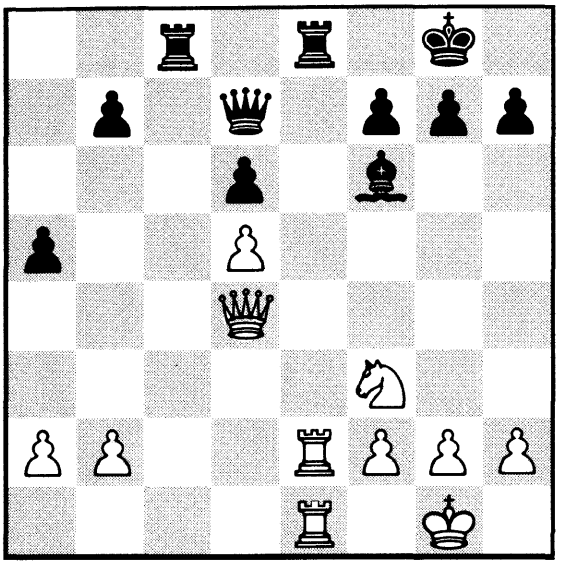
(Black's position is not as safe as it seems)

Things seem to be drawish in diagram 100, but White sees that Black's Rook is the glue that holds the enemy position together—it defends the back rank and it defends the Queen. With that in mind, the student can understand White's desire to deflect the d8-Rook from its role as guardian of the Queen. Thus: **1.Re8+!** when

1...Rxe8 On 1...Kg7 White wins by making use of an x-ray: 2.Rxd8! **2.Qxd6** gives White a winning material advantage.

A famous (and complicated) example of DEFLECTION can be seen in diagram 101.

(101)



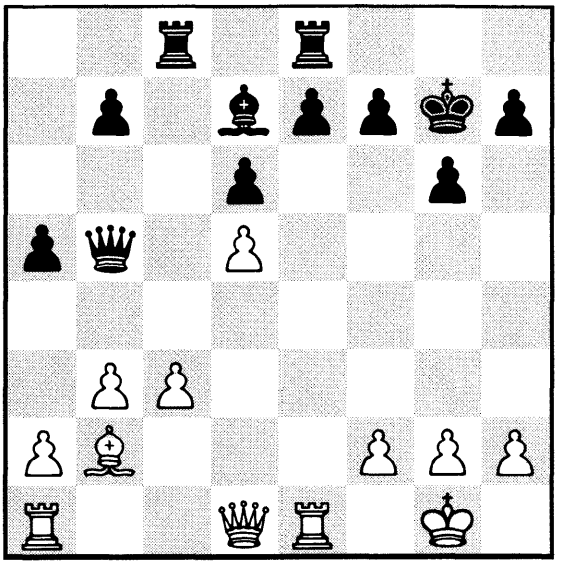
(Adams-Torre, New Orleans 1920. White to play)

White sees that Rxe8+ would lead to mate if Black's c8-Rook or Queen could be pulled away from the defense of e8. The following deflecting moves may seem outrageous, but their goals are simple and to the point: pull one defender away from e8 and the game will be White's: **1.Qg4!** This threatens the Queen and prepares to answer 1...Qxg4?? with 2.Rxe8+ Rxe8 3.Rxe8 mate. **1...Qb5 2.Qc4!!** Very pretty. White dares Black's Rook or Queen to take on c4. **2...Qd7** Both 2...Qxc4?? and 2...Rxc4?? fail to 3.Rxe8+ with mate to follow. **3.Qc7!!** Still trying to deflect Black's Queen or Rook away from e8. White makes it clear that no price is too high to achieve this goal. **3...Qb5 4.a4!** White never stops harassing the Black Queen. **4...Qxa4** Avoiding 4...Rxc7?? 5.Rxe8+ and mates. **5.Re4!** Threatening the mundane 6.Qxc8 Rxc8 7.Rxa4 with an extra Rook in the endgame. **5...Qb5 6.Qxb7!**, 1-0. Black resigned because 6...Rxe4 7.Qxc8+ (7.Qxb5 is also winning) 7.. Qe8 8.Qxe8+ and mates, or 6...Qxb7 7.Rxe8+ Rxe8 8.Rxe8 mate. It may look like magic but, if you understand deflection, you can do it too!

Double Attack

A pure DOUBLE ATTACK involves two different attacking pieces (compared to a fork, which attacks two pieces with just one) that simultaneously threaten to capture two different defending pieces.

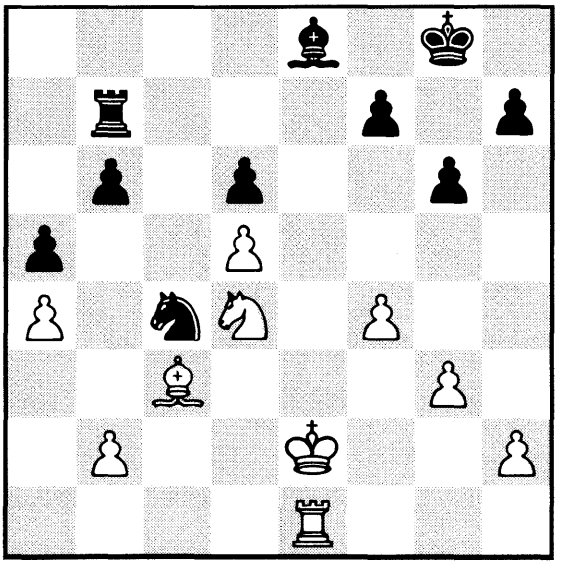
(102)



(White to move and win Black's Queen)

The position in diagram 102 shows us a double attack in unison with a check. White wins with **1.c4+** when the b2-Bishop attacks Black's King and the c4-pawn hits the Black Queen.

(103)



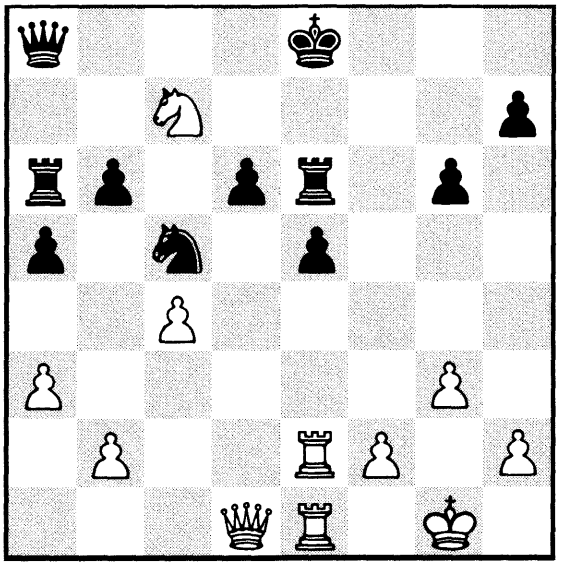
(White's King and Rook do the damage)

Of course, double attacks don't have to employ a check. In diagram 103 White moves his King and creates a "quiet" but highly effective double threat: **1.Kd3!** attacks both c4 (with the King) and e8 (with the Rook). Black can't avoid the loss of a piece.

Fork

A FORK occurs when one piece attacks two or more enemy units at the same time. Though beginners often think that only Knights have the capacity to fork, the truth is that virtually any piece (including pawns) can accomplish the task.

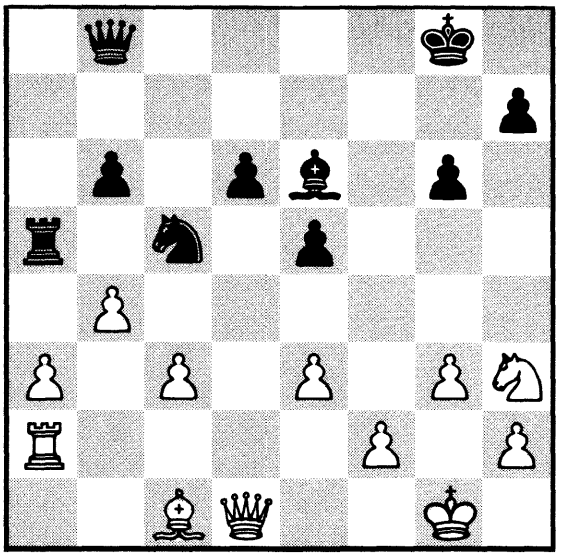
(104)



(FAMILY FORK)

Diagram 104 shows us everyone's favorite fork. White's Knight threatens the Black King, Queen and both Rooks all at the same time!

(105)



(Two FORKS)

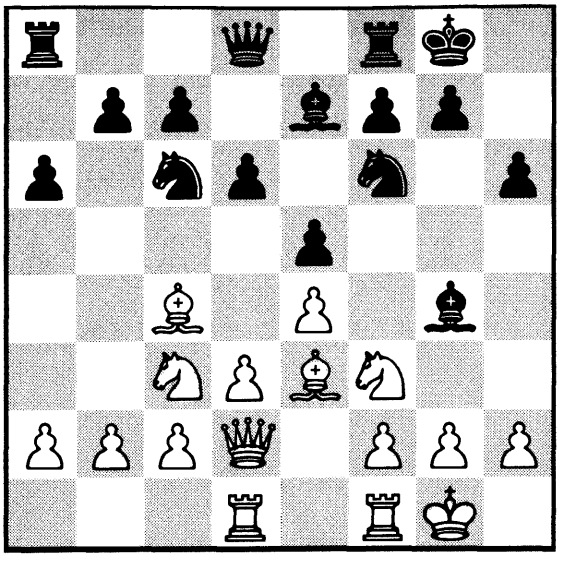
In diagram 105 we see the White b-pawn forking a Rook (on a5) and a Knight (on c5). In the meantime, Black's Bishop on e6 is forking White's Rook on a2 and his Knight on h3.

Pins and Skewers

PINS and SKEWERS are two of the most basic and important tactical ideas in chess. By attacking two pieces—one directly, one X-RAYED—on a diagonal, file or rank, you ensure a gain in material or, at the very least, that the front piece can't move without losing something of greater value.

Though similar, the difference between the two is delineated by which piece is actually attacked: With a pin, the less valuable piece is the first to be attacked.

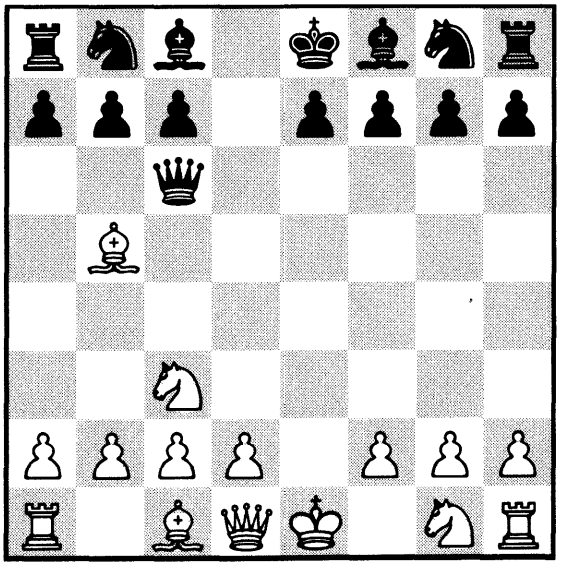
(106)



(A garden-variety PIN)

In diagram 106, Black's Bishop on g4 is pinning the f3-Knight. This immobilizes the horse since any Knight move would lead to ...Bxd1, picking up White's Rook. Such a pin usually doesn't lead to material gain but, in some situations, it can be quite an annoyance.

(107)

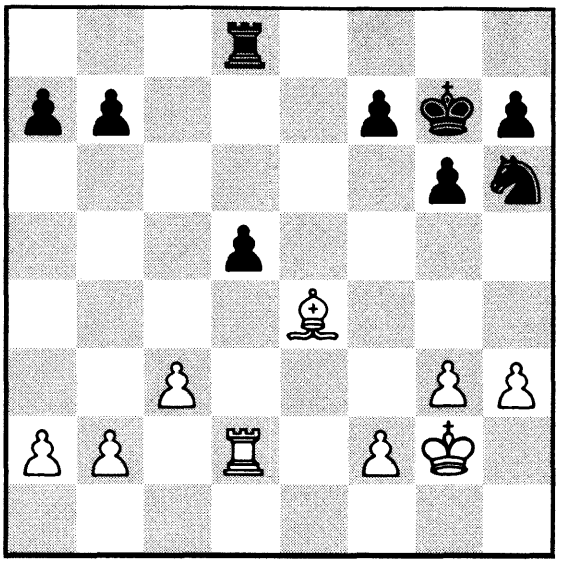


(Devastation disguised as a PIN)

In diagram 107 we see a far more potent pin. Here the Black Queen is pinned to its King. Since a player is not allowed to give his King away, the Queen is unable to run and, as a result, is lost.

Bishops are the most common pinning pieces, but Queens and Rooks can also get into the act:

(108)

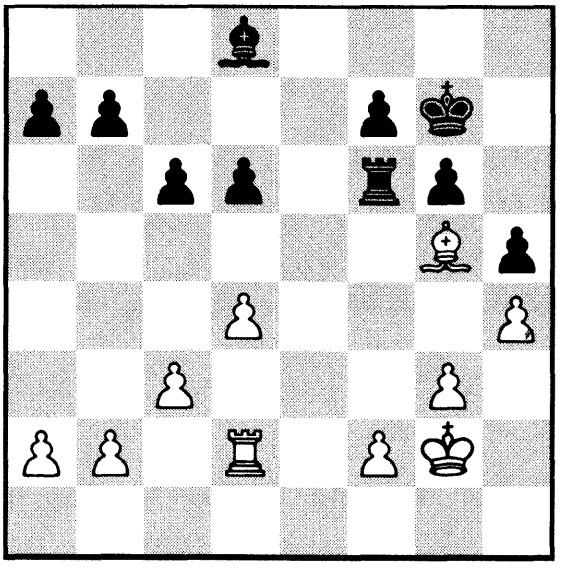


(PIN it and win it)

It's Black to move in diagram 108. Black's pawn would love to eat the White Bishop by 1...dxe4. Unfortunately, the d1-Rook is pinning it to Black's d8-Rook and, as a result, that tempting capture (1...dxe4) would lose to 2.Rxd8. Though Black has the move, he can't avoid the loss of his pawn.

A skewer is the same as a pin, except the more valuable piece is the first to be attacked.

(109)



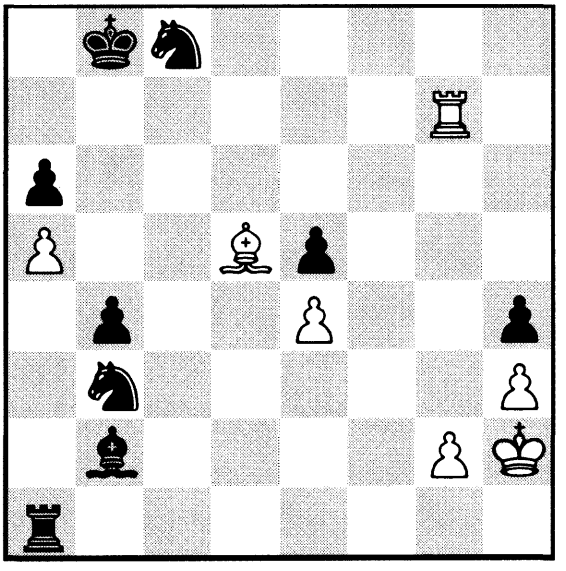
(Black's Rook and Bishop are SKEWERED)

In diagram 109 Black's Rook is attacked by White's Bishop but, if it moves to safety, the Bishop on d8 will be lost to Bxd8. Because of this, the skewer ensures the win of the Exchange (Black has to allow Bxf6).

Windmill

Of all tactical devices, the WINDMILL is by far my favorite. Consisting of discovered checks followed by normal checks followed by more discovered checks, the attacker is able to virtually devour the entire enemy army while facing no resistance at all.

(110)



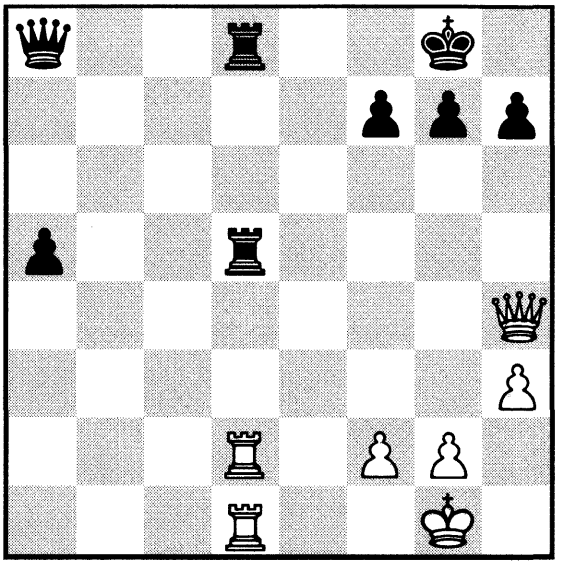
(White pigs out on Black's army)

White is two pieces down and appears to be lost. However, a windmill enables White to change the material count in a drastic way **1.Rb7+** Forcing the Black King to step onto the d5-Bishop's diagonal. **1...Ka8 2.Rxb4+** This discovered check forces Black's reply. **2...Ka7 3.Rb7+** White once again sets up a discovered check by forcing the enemy King on the d5-a8 diagonal **3...Ka8 4.Rxb3+ Ka7 5.Rb7+ Ka8 6.Rxb2+ Ka7 7.Rb7+ Ka8 8.Rb1+ Ka7 9.Rxa1** and White is suddenly a Rook and a pawn ahead!

X-Rays

An X-RAY is largely based on smoke and mirrors; it takes advantage of pieces that seem to be adequately defended but really aren't. For example, diagram 111 shows a position where Black appears to have everything firmly in hand.

(111)



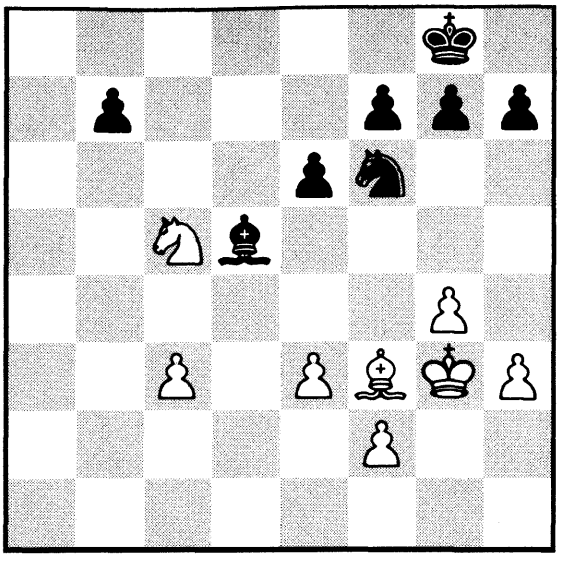
(Black's weak back rank leads to a particularly virulent X-RAY)

Black is a pawn up and threatens ...Rxd2. Since 1.Rxd5 Rxd5 2.Rxd5 Qxd5 leaves Black in command, White has to come up with something shocking if he's going to turn this game around.

The x-ray becomes a reality when we knock the feet (in this case the d8-Rook acts as the "feet" of the d5-Rook) out from under the leading piece: **1.Qxd8+!** shatters Black's dreams since now the d5-Rook is a dead duck. After the further **1...Qxd8** Even worse is 1...Rxd8 2.Rxd8+ Qxd8 3.Rxd8 mate. **2.Rxd5 Qf8 3.Rd8** White ends up with an extra Rook and wins easily.

Though x-rays usually center around Queens and Rooks, other pieces have the ability to make x-rays of their own.

(112)



(The f3-Bishop X-RAYS through to the b7-pawn)

It's White to play. Black has seen that 1.Bxd5 Nxd5 2.c4 (or 2.Nxb7 Nxc3) 2...Nb6 won't lead to anything for White, but he failed to account for **1.Nxb7!**, a move that shows that the f3-Bishop is x-raying through to the b7-pawn.

Zwischenzug

ZWISCHENZUG is a German word that describes an "in-between move " This "in-between move" is an unexpected reply tossed in the middle of an expected sequence of moves.

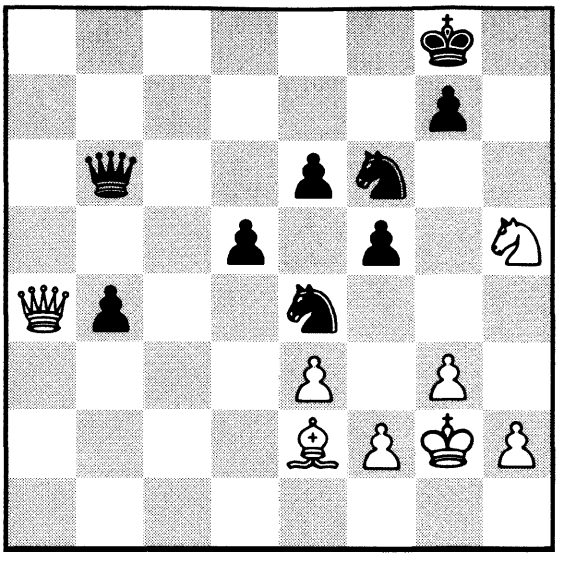
Zwischenzugs are important for the following reasons:

1) You'll sound like a genius when you say, "I won by playing an unforeseen zwischenzug."

   If image is everything, huge, foreign, sophisticated, sexy words like this one will go a long way towards changing your persona from "chess nerd" to "that mysterious, super-intelligent guy/girl who happens to play chess."

2) More importantly, you will also find that looking for shots that interfere with the result of a normal string of moves will allow you to steal many games that appeared to be taking a downward turn.

(113)



(Black tosses his win out the window)

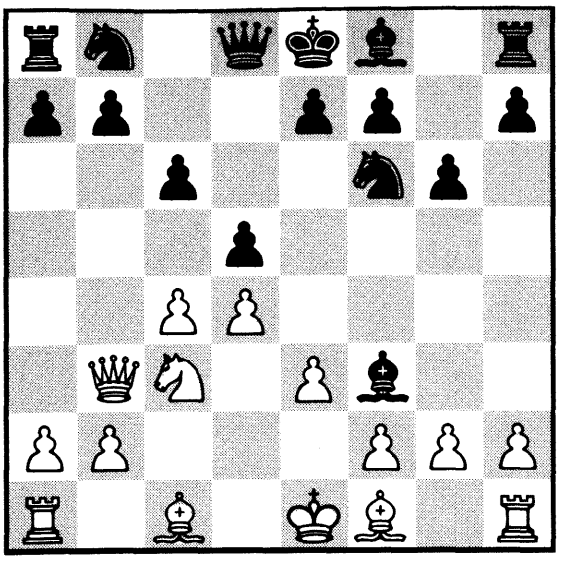
White is a pawn down and won't be able to combat Black's crushing passed b-pawn. The straightforward 1...b3 would win pretty easily, but Black decides to first trade off White's advanced Knight, thinking that exchanges should simplify the winning process.

Black's mistake is to take White's immediate recapture for granted. After **1...Nxh5??** White tosses in a zwischenzug before recapturing on h5: **2.Qe8+!** Now the game is drawn by perpetual check after **2...Kh7 3.Qxh5+ Kg8 4.Qe8+**, etc.

3) The possibility of a zwischenzug forces your opponent to play with accuracy. Taking enemy possibilities for granted sets you up for a hidden knockout punch.

In diagram 114 Black sees the need to defend b7, but first he decided to rupture White's kingside pawn structure.

(114)



(Black has overlooked a ZWISCHENZUG)

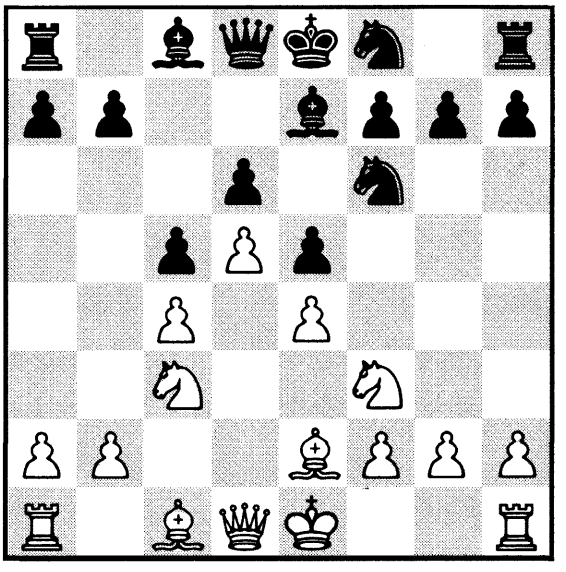
Black, who is temporarily a piece up, has just played ...Bxf3, capturing White's f3-Knight with his g4-Bishop. He expected the seemingly forced 1.gxf3 when 1...Qd7 defends b7. Unexpectedly, White refuses to recapture his piece and instead plays **1.Qxb7!** This zwischenzug slaps Black back to reality. Suddenly White has captured a pawn and threatens both the a8-Rook and the f3-Bishop. This forces the win of at least a pawn (after 1...Nbd7 2.gxf3) and puts White firmly in control.

King in the Center

If your King is safely castled and your opponent's King is still in the center, this should act like a red flag telling you to rip the position open and begin a quick attack.

Naturally, a flash attack will not be possible if the center is completely blocked (it is often acceptable to put off castling for a while in closed positions), but leaving your King in the middle is a suicidal act in OPEN positions.

(115)

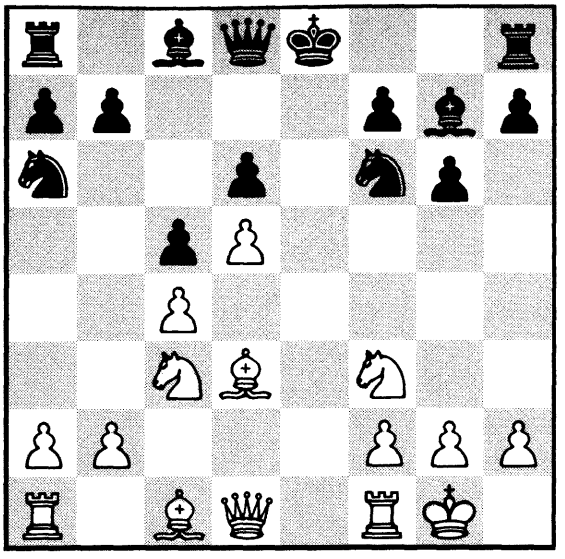


(Black's central King is safe in this closed position)

Rules:

1) Get your King castled as quickly as possible!

(116)

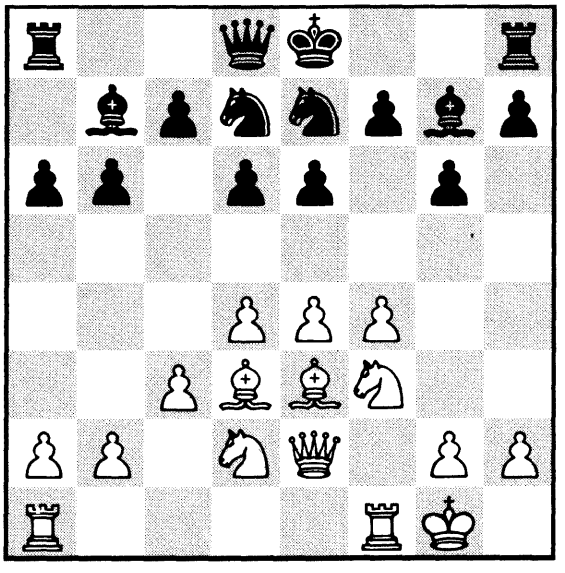


(Black to move)

In diagram 116 there isn't much to think about. Black can consider aggressive ideas like ...Nc7 (playing for ...b7-b5) or ...Bg4 (weakening White's hold on the e5-square) only AFTER he gets safely castled.

2) If the opponent has left his King in the center, try to punish him by starting an immediate attack.

(117)



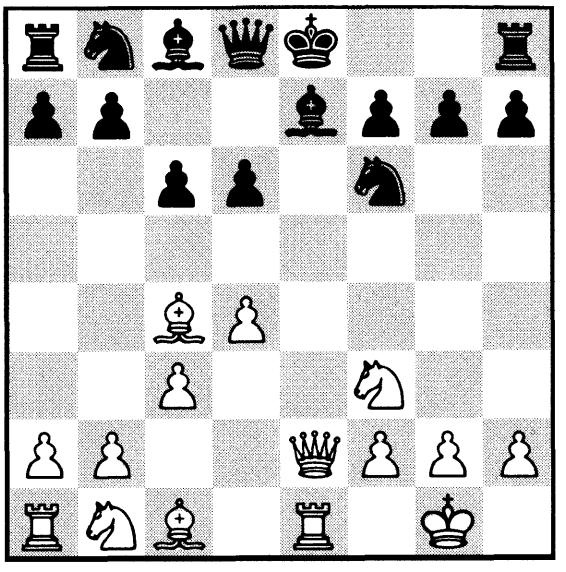
(Black begs to be spanked)

White can teach his opponent a lesson with **1.f5!** Trying to rip open the center. **1...exf5 2.exf5 gxf5** Much

better is 2...0-0, though White's advantage would not be in doubt. **3.Bg5** when Black's King can only dream of a safe haven.

3) If you can stop the opponent from castling, then by all means do so!

(118)



(Black's King is trapped in the center)

Black has unwisely left his King in the middle and White's last move (1.Qe2) makes sure it will stay there (1...0-0 would lose a piece to 2.Qxe7).

Kingside Focal-Points

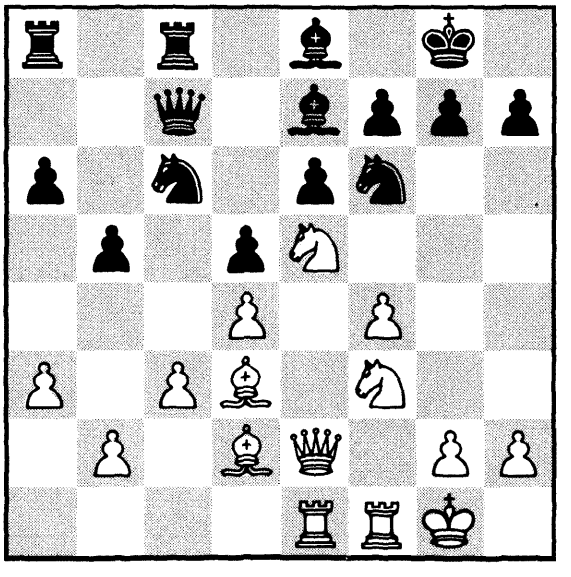
Many people feel that a kingside attack entails tossing your pieces in the direction of the enemy King, hoping that something good happens. Naturally, this unscientific way of thinking has little to do with a master's plans during an actual game. To successfully thump an enemy monarch, the experienced player knows that there are five basic targets (focal-points) to aim at: 1) h7; 2) g7; 3) f7; 4) g6; 5) the dark-squared complex at h6, g7 and f6. Let's take a closer look at each of these areas of crisis:

Attack Against h7

The h7-square is an important one in that several White pieces can easily take aim in its direction (see Classic Bishop Sacrifice, page 116). Here are some typical scenarios:

1) A Bishop on the b1-h7 diagonal strikes terror into the heart of an h7-pawn.

(119)

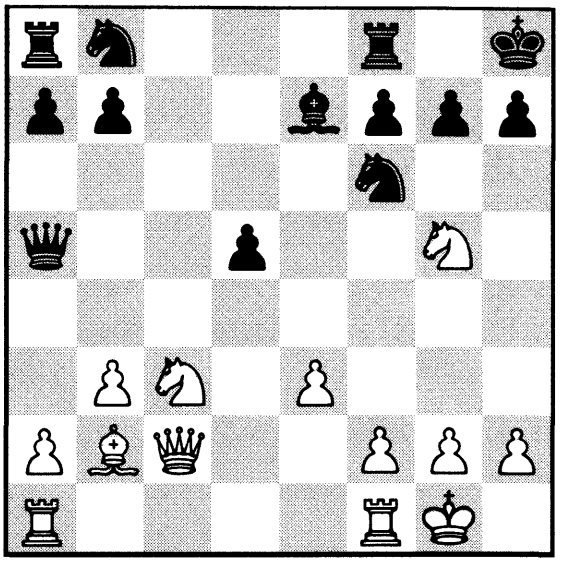


(The Bishop eyes the h7-pawn)

White's pressure against h7 will bother Black after a kingside advance via g2-g4-g5 forces the f6-Knight (the main defender of h7) to move away.

2) A Knight can jump to g5 and place pressure against h7.

(120)

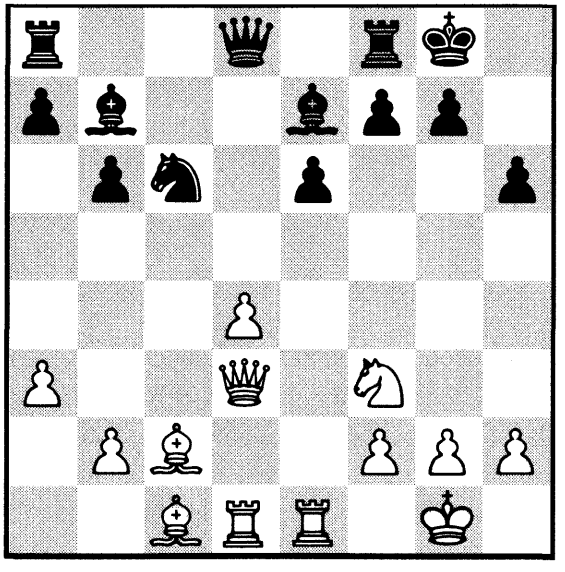


(A pretty combination splatters Black)

In diagram 120 White gains a decisive advantage with the shocking **1.Nxd5!!** Opening the b2-f6 diagonal with gain of time. **1...Qxd5** And not 1...Nxd5 2.Qxh7 mate. **2.Bxf6** when the twin threats of Bxe7 and Qxh7 mate are more than Black can handle.

3) A Queen can move to the b1-h7 diagonal or leap to the h-file (Qd1-h5).

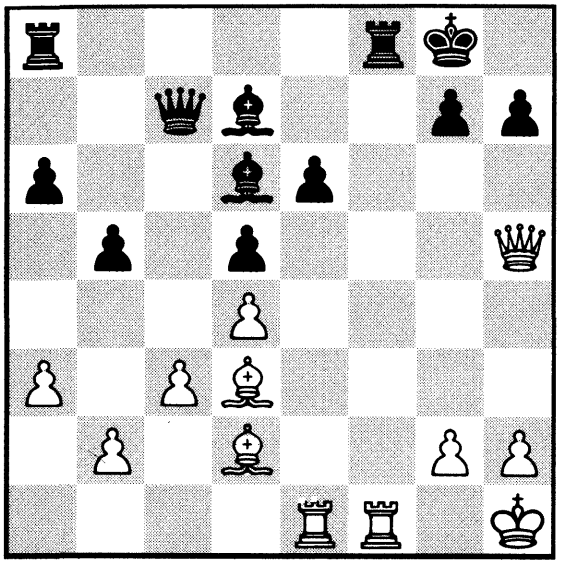
(121)



(This lineup on the b1-h7 diagonal can be very effective)

In diagram 121 White's lineup on the b1-h7 diagonal (threatening Qh7 mate) forces Black to part with a pawn by 1...g6 2.Bxh6 or 1...f5 2.Rxe6.

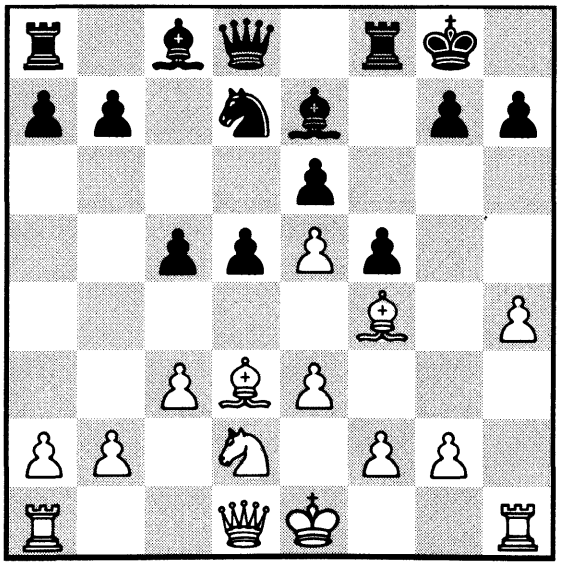
(122)



(White just moved his Queen from e2 to h5. The threat against h7 is nasty)

4) A Rook on h1 can become an awesome attacking piece if White's h-pawn disappears.

(123)



(Should Black capture the h-pawn?)

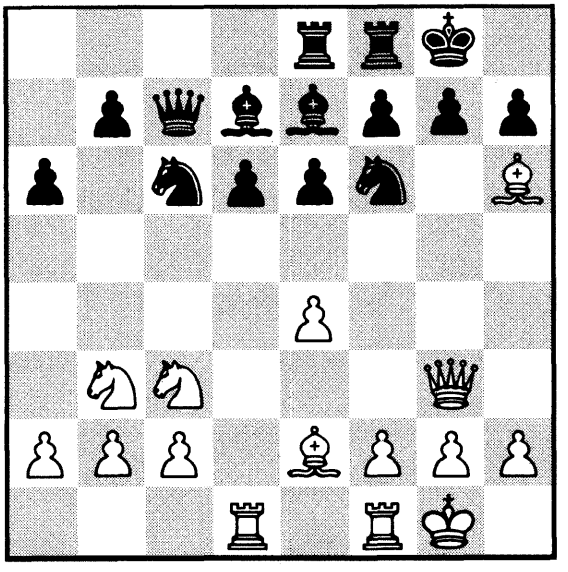
In diagram 123, taking the h-pawn by 1...Bxh4?? allows 2.Qh5 when any Bishop move falls victim to 3.Qxh7+.

Innumerable players have been mated by an enemy Queen moving to h7. Because of its accessibility, great care must be taken to defend this point and, of course, every chessplayer must keep his eyes peeled for possibilities concerning it.

Attack Against g7

Of the big three kingside squares (h7, g7, f7), this is the hardest to reach. Threats are usually generated against g7 by placing a Bishop on the a1-g7 diagonal or by Bh6.

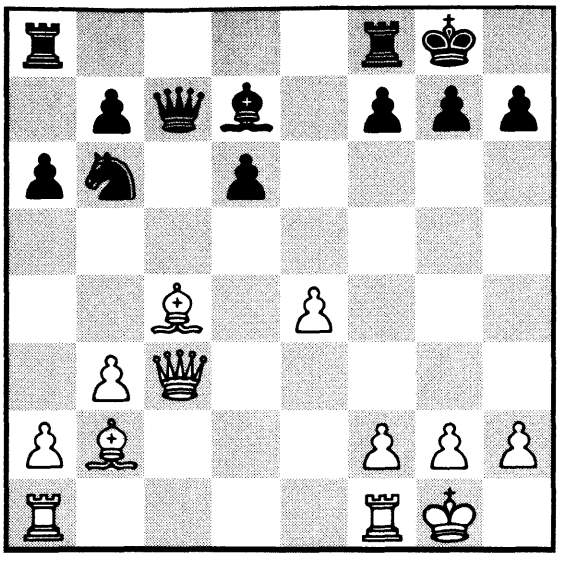
(124)



(White just played Bc1-h6. Black can't avoid the loss of the Exchange)

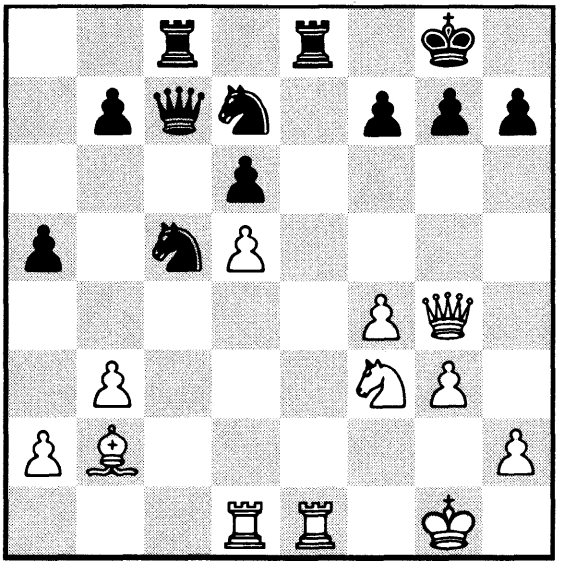
The attacking Queen can also rest on the a1-g7 diagonal, though moves like Qg3, Qg4, Qg5 or even Qh6 are more common.

(125)



(Black cannot avoid mate on g7)

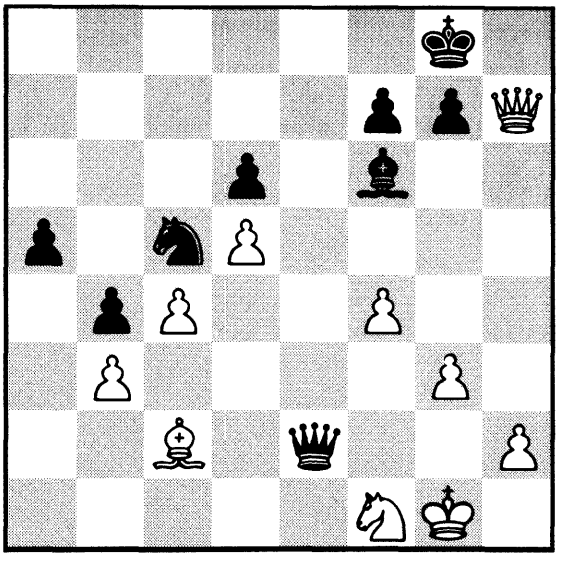
(126)



(The Queen on g4 combines with the Bishop on b2 to create a nasty threat against g7)

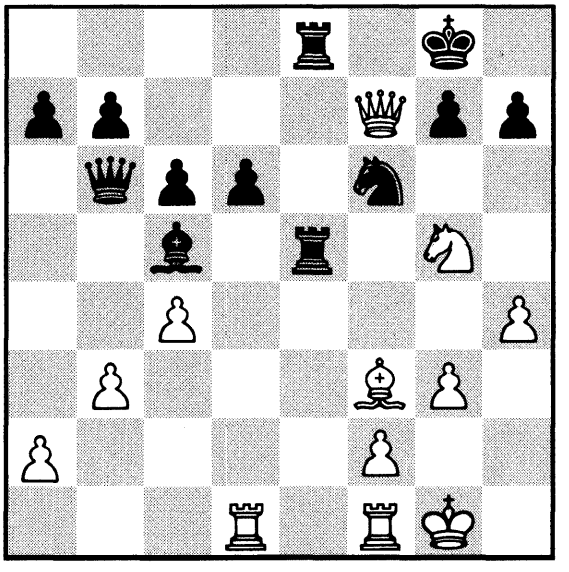
Though g7 is usually difficult to reach, an attack against it tends to be deadlier than similar attacks against f7 or h7. The reason for this is straightforward: place the Black King on g8 (its normal castled position). A typical Qxh7+ (see diagram 127) often allows the enemy King to run to f8 (though this is not necessarily pleasant for the second player!). A move like Qxf7+ (see diagram 128) allows Kh8. However, a check by Qxg7+ (see diagram 129) will most likely end the game on the spot!

(127)



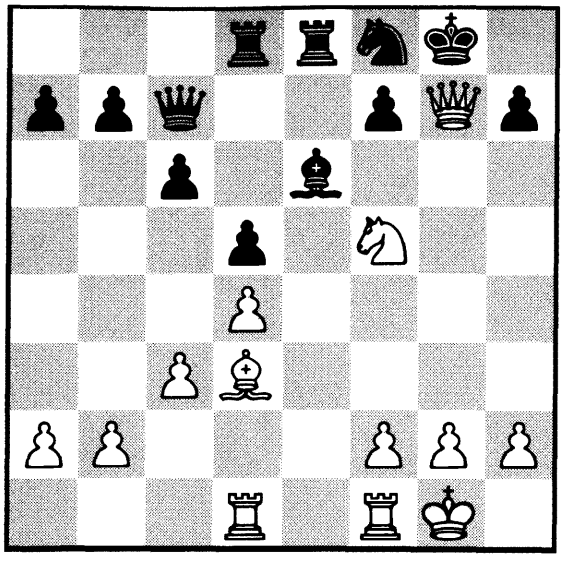
(Black's King is perfectly safe after ...Kf8)

(128)



(Black's King lives to rule another day after ...Kh8)

(129)



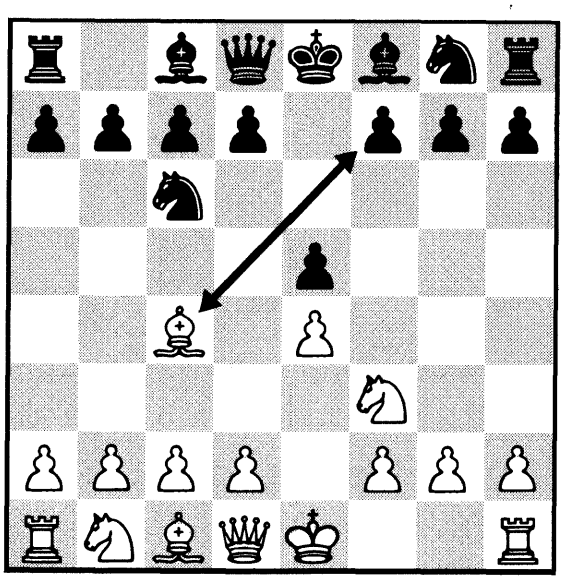
(The King is dead since f8 and h8 are covered)

It's clear that g7 makes a nice target for White's pieces. Next time you think that a kingside attack is in order, consider g7 as a possible main course.

Attack Against f7

The f7-square is a favorite knockout target for opening punches since, before castling, it is only protected by the King. This means that a simple developing move like Bc4 (after 1.e4 e5 2.Nf3 Nc6) puts instant pressure against this point.

(130)

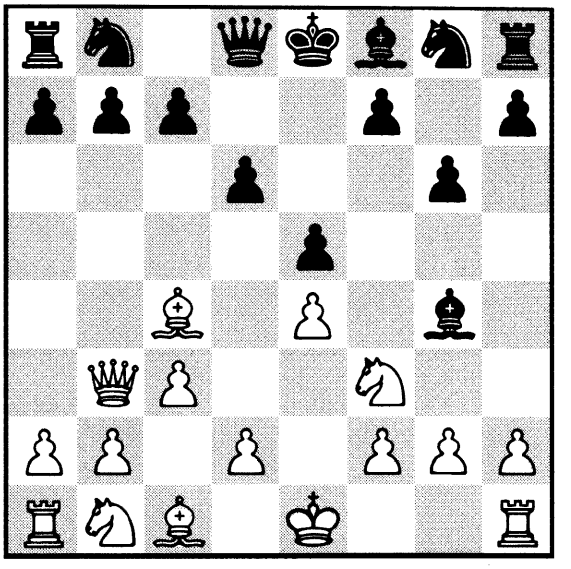


(White immediately eyes the f7-point)

Other pieces can also find their way to f7 with relative ease:

1) A Queen can jump to b3, f3 or h5.

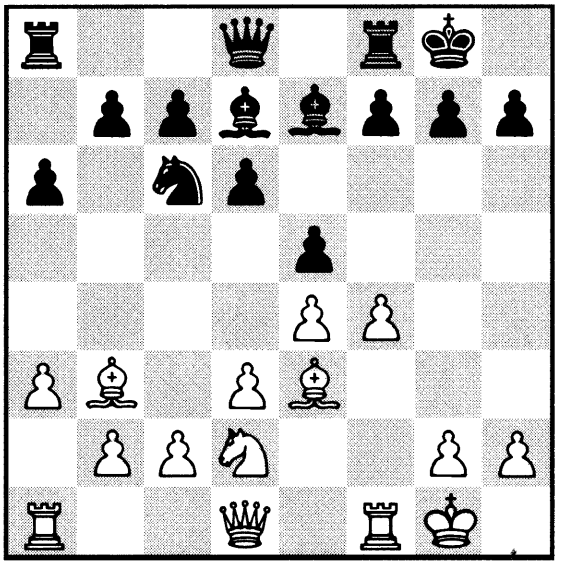
(131)



(White just played his Queen from d1 to b3. The double threat of Qxb7 and Bxf7+ forces the win of a pawn)

2) An open f-file gives White's Rook instant access to f7.

(132)

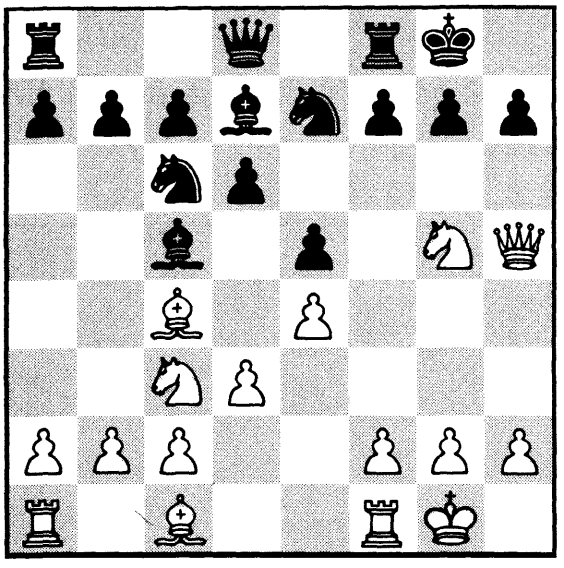


(White prepares to light a fire against f7)

In diagram 132 White has just advanced his f2-pawn to f4. His threat of fxe5 (combined with Qh5 and/or the doubling of Rooks) will open the f-file and increase the pressure against f7.

3) A Knight jumping from f3 to g5 brings another piece to bear against f7.

(133)



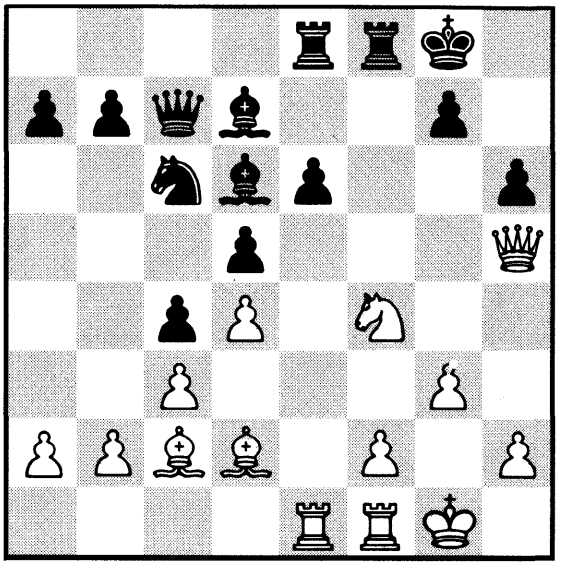
(Black is squashed)

The double threat against h7 and f7 seals Black's fate. For example, **1...h6 2.Nxf7** when considerable material losses can't be avoided.

Attack Against g6

This square often becomes weak after Black defends h7 with ...h7-h6. If Black's f-pawn has been removed or has advanced from f7, then the g6-square can turn into a hole that the entire White army salivates over.

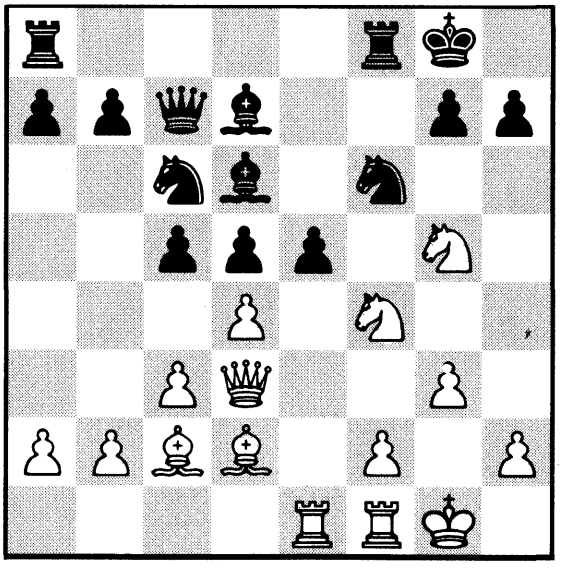
(134)



(White's Knight, Queen and c2-Bishop all have access to g6)

A very similar but even more striking example can be seen in diagram 135.

(135)



(White sacrifices on h7 in order to weaken g6)

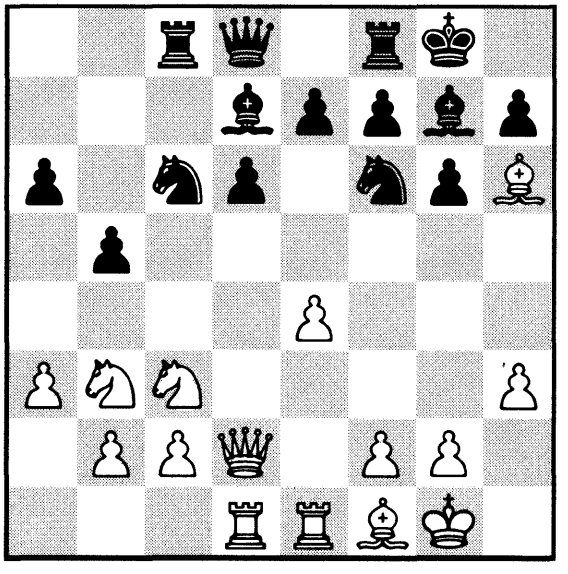
Black has just taken the initiative in the center with 1...e6-e5. Unfortunately, he has missed White's pretty idea to weaken g6 and force a mate: **2.Qxh7+!!** Now g6 is accessible to the White forces. **2...Nxh7 3.Bxh7+ Kh8 4.Ng6 mate**.

Attack Against Dark-Squared Complex on f6, g7, and h6

When Black fianchettos a Bishop by ...g7-g6 followed by ...Bg7, the squares on f6, g7 and h6 have all been potentially weakened. Though this "potential" is often never realized, an experienced player is always aware of it from both sides of the board.

Since the fianchettoed Bishop is the main defender of the f6 and h6 squares, the attacker often goes out of his way to trade it off. The most common way to do this can be seen in diagram 136, where White has just played 1.Bh6.

(136)

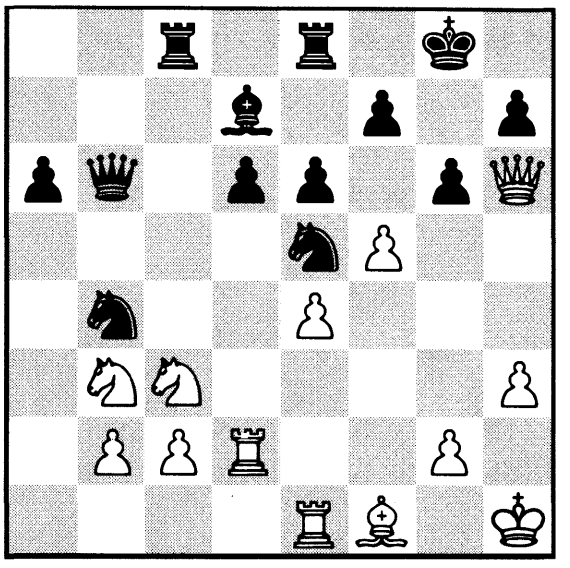


(Black cannot avoid the exchange of his dark-squared Bishop)

White prepared for this Bishop move by Bc1-e3 and Qd1-d2. Black must accept the trade of Bishops since 1...Bh8 loses the Exchange to 2.Bxf8.

Once the Bishops are exchanged, White's pieces may suddenly have access to f6, g7 and h6.

(137)

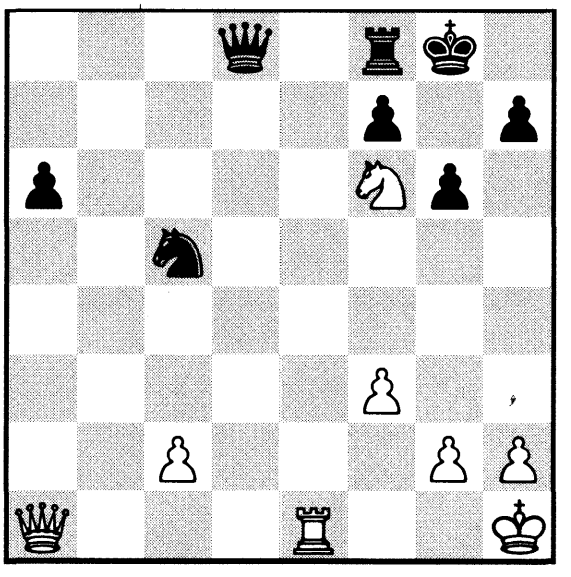


(White mates by force)

In diagram 137 White's Queen has already taken up residence on the weakened h6-square. Now **1.f6** completes the occupation of Black's kingside dark-squares; nothing can be done about **2.Qg7 mate**.

Turning f6 into a hole causes the defender many problems, one of the most common of these can be seen in diagram 138.

(138)



(The Knight on f6 forces significant material gains)

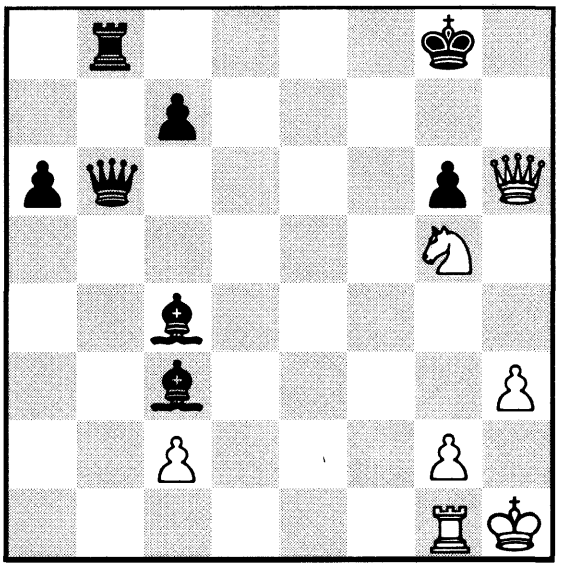
White has just played 1.Ng4-f6+. This forces the Black King to step onto the painful a1-h8 diagonal (1...Qxf6 2.Qxf6 is obviously out of the question). White can now win material by moving his Knight with discovered check. The best option after **1...Kh8** is **2.Nd7+**, winning the enemy horse on c5 after **2...f6 3.Nxc5**.

Mating Net

When you are in the middle of an exciting mating attack, the normal reaction is to check the enemy King as much as possible. Random checking gives you a feeling of control, it gives you a feeling of power, and, it is completely wrong!

Remember: the purpose of a kingside initiative is to checkmate the enemy King or to exchange your attack for some kind of long lasting advantage that will torture your opponent for the rest of the game. To actually checkmate an enemy King, you have to stop it from running to safety, and ill-considered checks often chase it out of the embattled area, thereby allowing it to escape.

(139)



(To check or not to check?)

Before you call check, consider the move in some detail and make sure your check is really doing something positive. One very useful concept is to first prevent the enemy King from running away. Once that is done, any check should have decisive significance. Trapping the opponent's King in your "net of doom" is known as a MATING NET.

The position in diagram 139 shows a typical mating attack. Though White can check Black's King (a very tempting possibility!), a much better idea is to first play **1.Rf1!**, taking control of

the f-file and preventing any kind of flight across it. After 1.Rf1 the mating net is complete and Black can't avoid mate or decisive material losses: **1...Bxf1 2.Qxh7+** followed by **3.Qf7** is mate (see Deflection, page 124), while **1...Bf6 2.Qxg6+ Kf8 3.Rxf6+** leads to mass destruction. Black's best (after 1.Rf1!) is **2...Qf6**, but this would not leave White's eventual victory in doubt.

Mating Patterns

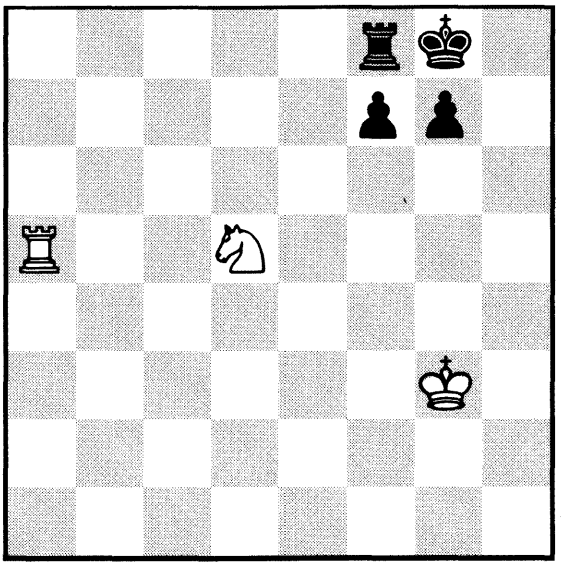
Nobody should have to reinvent the wheel, and this means that it's mandatory for all serious chessplayers to have a working knowledge of the basic mating patterns.

Aside from the fact that these patterns occur in game after game, their individual tactical quirks will enable you to enrich your combinational vision and blow the opposition out of the water in violent fashion.

Anastasia's Mate

This pretty mate shows what a Knight and Rook can do when they set their mind to it. The Knight forces the Black King into a corner (while simultaneously making the g8 and g6 squares off limits) and the Rook finishes it off.

(140)

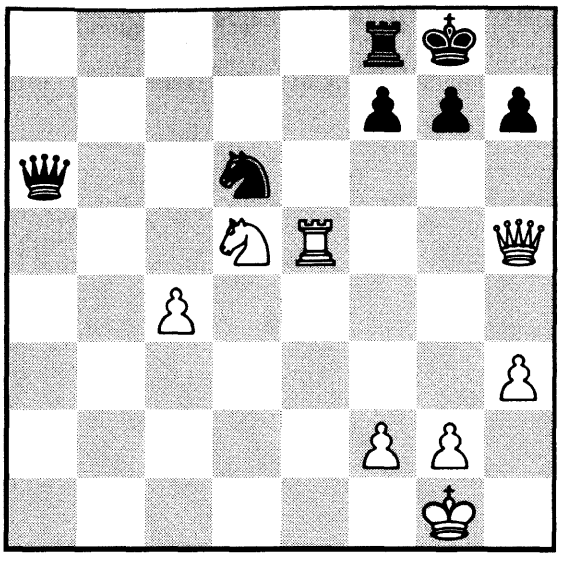


(White mates in two)

White ends the game with **1.Ne7+ Kh7 2.Rh5 mate**.

Now that we know the bare bones of this pattern, we can have a little fun and show how you can employ it in a more striking manner.

(141)

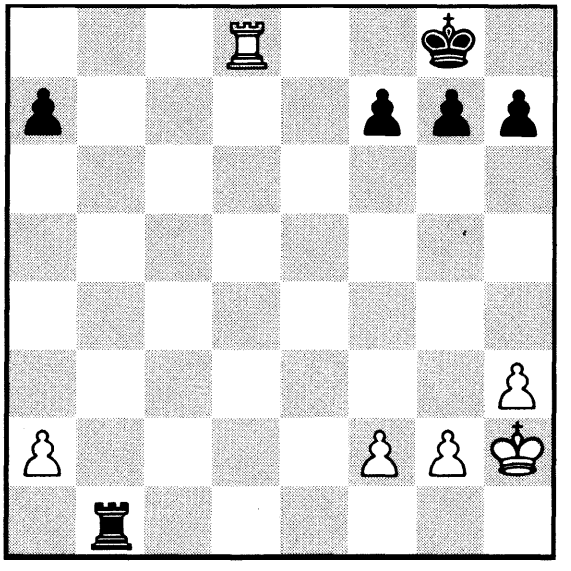


(White mates in three)

White gives up his Queen to force open the h-file: **1.Ne7+ Kh8 2.Qxh7+! Kxh7 3.Rh5 mate**. This uses the themes of DECOY (luring the Black King to h7) and CLEARANCE (violently freeing h5 for the White Rook).

Back Rank Mate

(142)

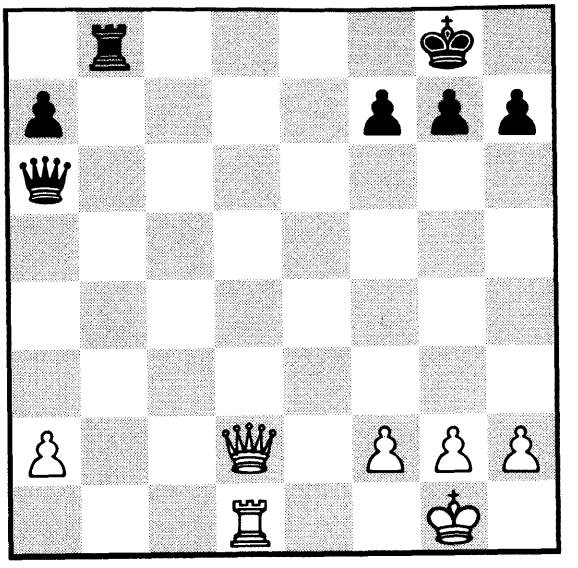


(Death on the back row)

Placing a Rook or a Queen on the opponent's BACK RANK can easily lead to mate if his King isn't able to step forward.

Since it's worth paying any price to checkmate the enemy King, considerable material can be offered in your quest for a back rank decision.

(143)

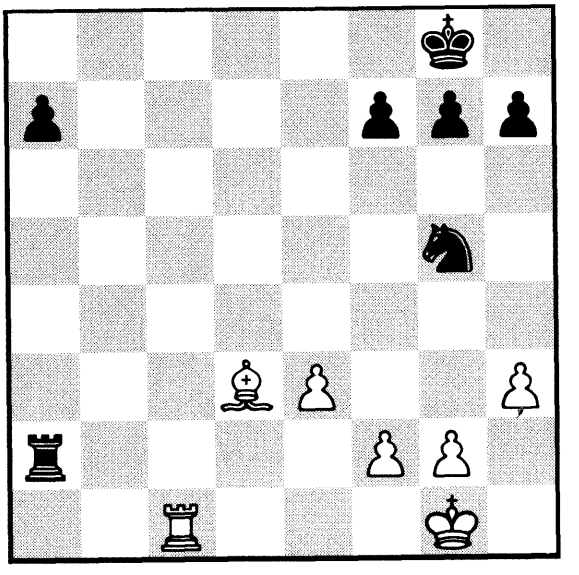


(White mates in two moves)

In diagram 143 White mates with **1.Qd8+! Rxd8 2.Rxd8 mate**.

Because back rank mates are so common, it is often a good idea to give your King a little room (this is called LUFT) by pushing the g-pawn or h-pawn one square.

(144)



(Black to play and create LUFT)

In diagram 144 Black does not want to play 1...h6?? since White's d3-Bishop still covers the h7-square (2.Rc8 would be mate). However, **1...g6!** nullifies White's back rank threat thanks to Black's newly acquired access to the g7-square; this allows Black to answer **2.Rc8+** with **2...Kg7**.

Blackburne's Mate

The ingredients of this mate are:

1) One Black King castled on the kingside.

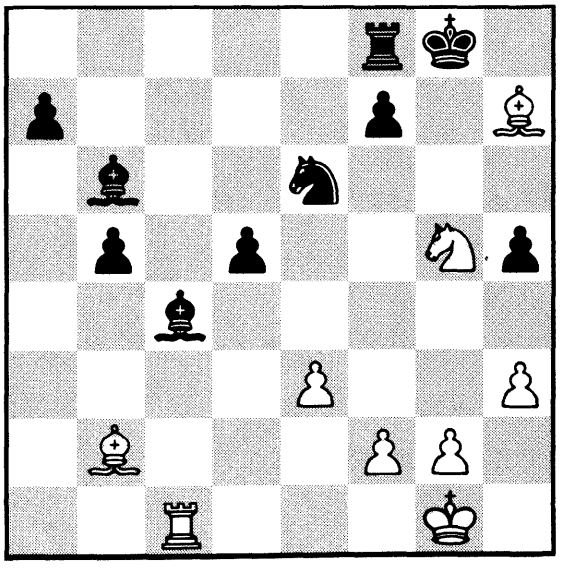
2) One Black Rook on f8.

3) Two White Bishops patrolling the a1-h8 and b1-h7 diagonals.

4) One White Knight on g5.

Shake all this stuff together and we get the mate seen in diagram 145.

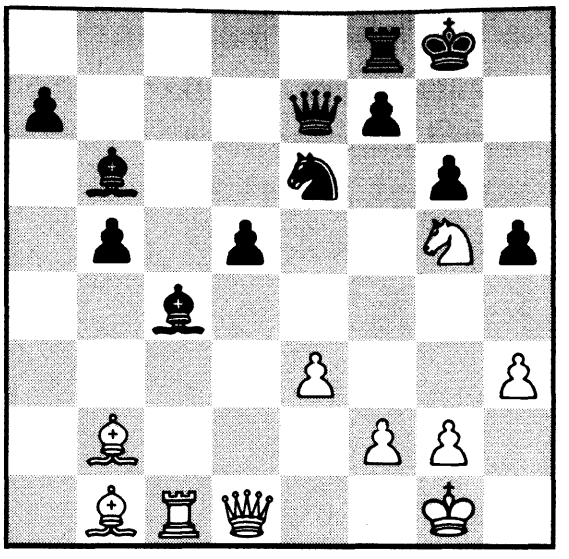
(145)



(Black's King is dog food)

Taking this pattern a step further, let's add a Black pawn on g6 and a White Queen on d1. We now get the following situation:

(146)



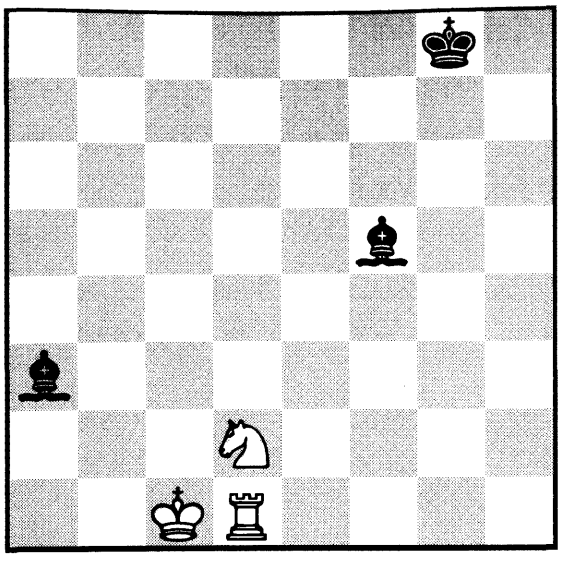
(White delivers a thunderous blow)

White can force the g6-pawn to move out of the way of his b1-Bishop by **1.Qxh5!** when Black can choose between **1...gxh5 2.Bh7 mate** or **1...f6** To stop Qh8 mate. **2.Qxg6+ Qg7 3.Qh7+!** Of course, 3.Nxe6 is also good enough. **3...Qxh7 4.Bxh7+ Kh8 5.Nxe6 Re8 6.Bf5** when White has won a whole piece (not to mention the annoying threat of Bxf6+).

Boden's Mate

This very pleasing pattern is a variation of a two Bishop mate. The basic scenario centers around a King that is castled queenside, two "friendly" pieces that block its access to d2 and d1, and enemy Bishops that control the h7-b1 diagonal (taking c2 and b1 away from the King) and the a3-c1 diagonal (giving mate). A bare bones look at this mate is seen in the following diagram.

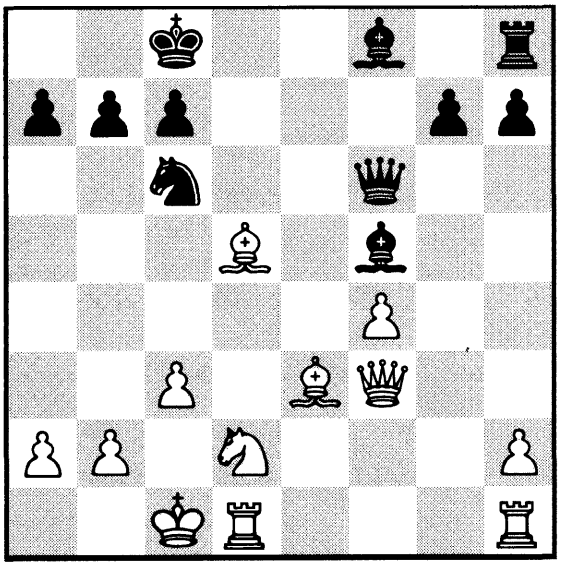
(147)



(White's King is mated by Black's two Bishops)

Since mate ends a game, great quantities of material can be sacrificed to make this position come about. The game Macdonell-Boden, 1869 (see diagram 148) was the first recorded instance of this pattern.

(148)



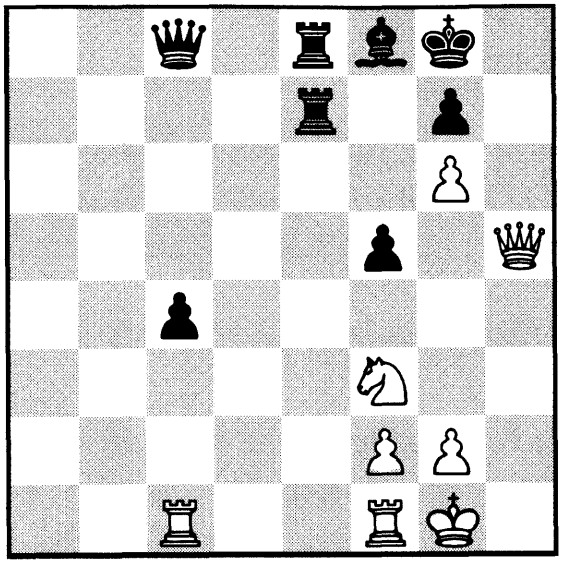
(Black mates in two moves)

Boden ended the game by **1...Qxc3+!** Forcing the b2-pawn to move away from its control over a3. **2.bxc3 Ba3 mate**.

Damiano's Mate

This mate is seen in many guises. It shows us that the combination of a pawn or Bishop on g6 plus a Queen on the open h-file is very powerful indeed!

(149)

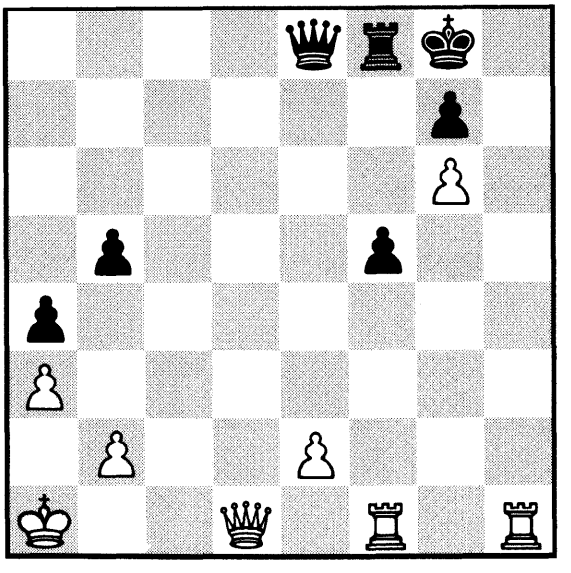


(A very useful mating pattern)

Though Black has the move in diagram 149, he can't stop Qh7 mate.

This mating pattern is so strong that a little imagination can net you some very pleasant results. The following position will give you a taste of Damiano's delicious mate.

(150)

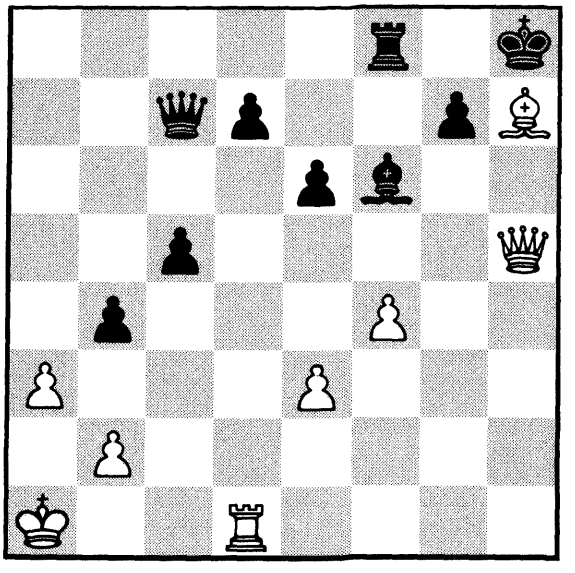


(Mate in five)

This mate was first discussed in a book by Damiano in 1512! White ends Black's existence by getting his Queen to the h-file (see Clearance Sacrifice, page 121) with gain of tempo: **1.Rh8+!** White also mates in five by 1.Qd5+ Rf7 2.gxf7+ Qxf7 3.Rh8+! Kxh8 4.Qxf7 followed by 5.Rh1 mate. However, this has nothing to do with our theme! **1...Kxh8 2.Rh1+ Kg8 3.Rh8+! Kxh8 4.Qh1+ Kg8 5.Qh7 mate**.

Note that a pawn or Bishop on g6 not only gives the White Queen access to h7, it also takes the flight square on f7 away from the Black King.

(151)



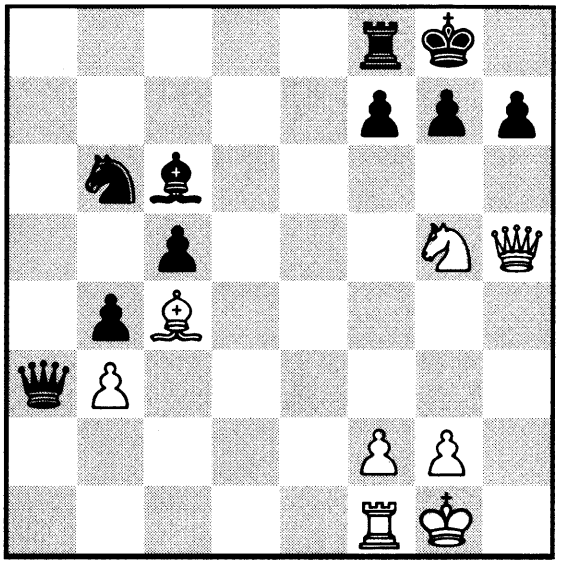
(White mates in two moves)

In diagram 151 White could play 1.Bf5+ Kg8 2.Qh7+ but Black's King can make a run for it by 2...Kf7. Because of this, White does much better to place his Bishop on g6: **1.Bg6+ Kg8 2.Qh7 mate**, since now f7 is not accessible to the beleaguered monarch.

Greco's Mate

This mate is based, like so many others, on the usual pressure against f7 and h7. However, in this case White makes use of a sacrifice to open up the h-file and deliver mate to the stalemated Black King.

(152)



(Black to play can't prevent mate)

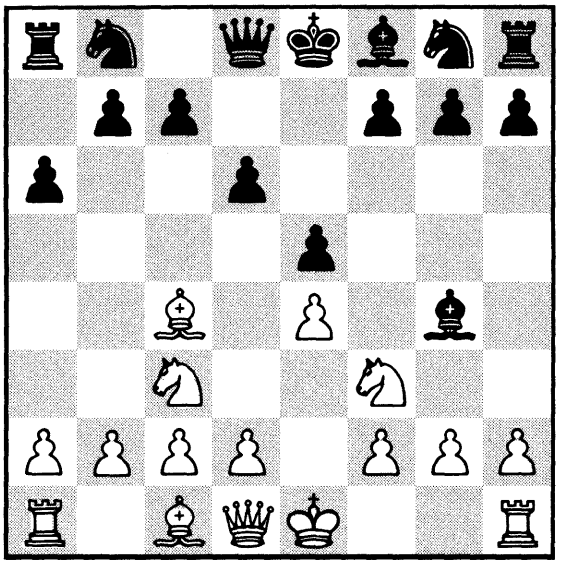
White threatens Qxh7 mate (a move like 1...Rd8 leads us into a smothered theme after 2.Qxf7+ Kh8 3.Qg8+! Rxg8 4.Nf7 mate) so Black plays **1...h6**. Mate is now forced after **2.Bxf7+ Kh8 3.Qg6!** The key move. Black, due to the threat of Qh7 mate, is forced to capture the Knight and open up the h-file. **3...hxg5 4.Qh5 mate**.

Légal's Mate

This pattern often turns up in the openings of beginners. It's based on two things: 1) an undefended enemy Bishop on g4; 2) the possibility of a mate delivered by two Knights and one Bishop.

The first recorded instance of this mate dates from 1750 in a game of Légal's. A typical sequence leading to our desired situation might arise as follows: **1.e4 e5 2.Nf3 d6 3.Bc4 Bg4 4.Nc3 a6??** when we arrive at the diagram.

(153)



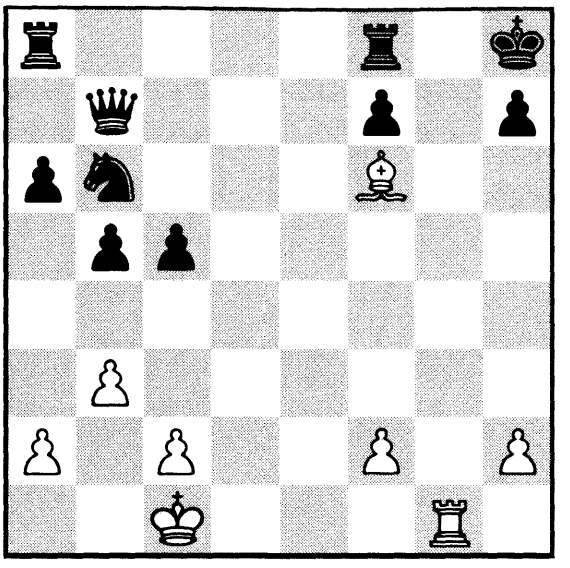
(Black loses material)

White plays the surprising **5.Nxe5!** At this point Black should accept the loss of a pawn and play 5...dxe5 6.Qxg4. However, most beginners would be so excited by the fact that White has "hung" his Queen that they would play **5...Bxd1??** without hesitation. Then comes **6.Bxf7+ Ke7 7.Nd5 mate!**

Morphy's Mate

This is a Rook and Bishop mate. Its most basic form can be seen in diagram 154.

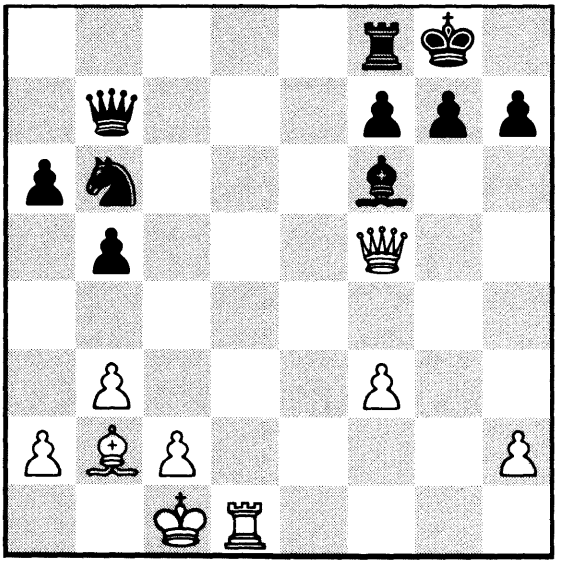
(154)



(Black's King is overwhelmed by White's two pieces)

Knowledge of this simple pattern enables you to easily spot more complex situations that ultimately lead to the same setup.

(155)



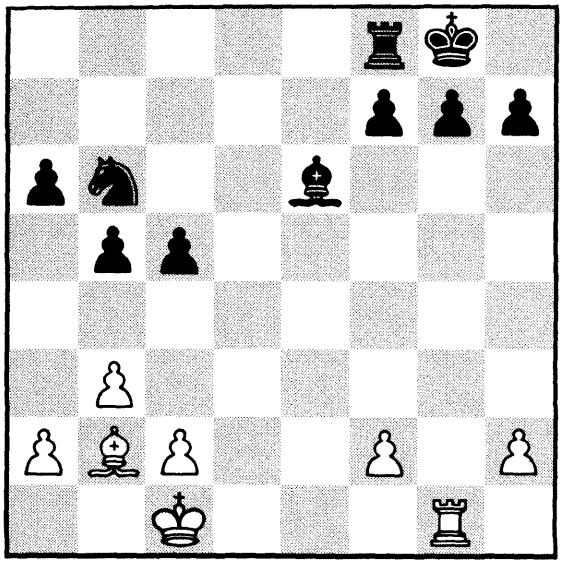
(White mates in three moves)

White forces a simple MORPHY'S MATE by **1.Qxf6! gxf6 2.Rg1+ Kh8 3.Bxf6 mate**.

Morphy's Concealed Mate

This mate is virtually the same as a normal MORPHY'S MATE, but White has to take an important detour before he delivers the final blow: a key defensive pawn must be snipped off the board first.

(156)



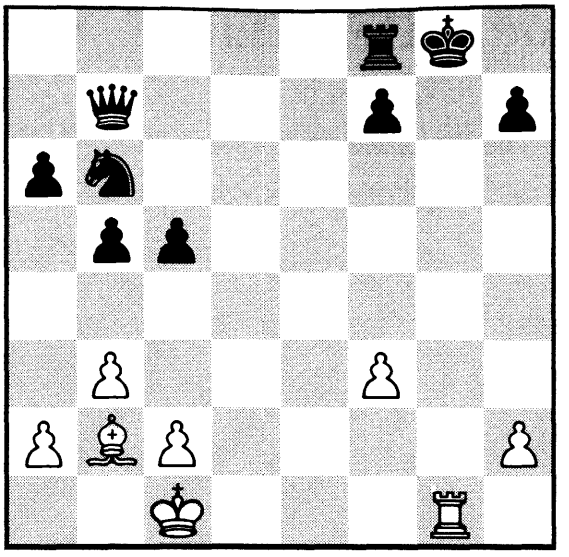
(White mates in five)

White polishes his opponent off by **1.Rxg7+ Kh8 2.Rxf7+** This is very important! Black would survive 2.Rg1+?? by 2...f6 when the b2-Bishop is blocked out of the attack **2...Kg8 3.Rg7+** Repeating the previous position, minus the Black f-pawn. **3...Kh8 4.Rg1+ Rf6 5.Bxf6 mate**.

Pillsbury's Mate

A variation of MORPHY'S MATE, here the checkmate is given by a Rook instead of a Bishop. The basic pattern is illustrated in diagram 157.

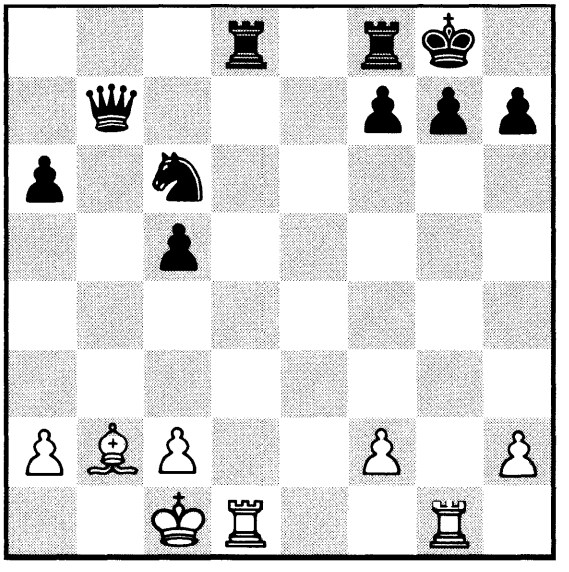
(157)



(Black is mated)

As usual, you should be willing to give up a lot of wood to make this a reality (if your goal is mate, you can safely give away your whole army as long as your final pawn kills the enemy King). The following diagram shows us a typical case:

(158)



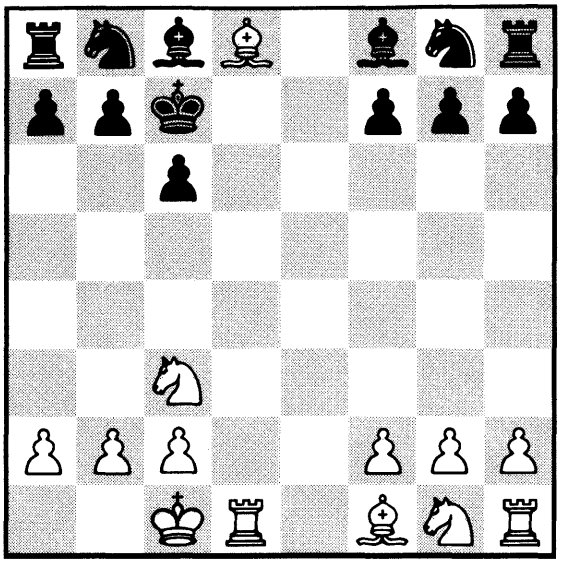
(White mates in three moves)

White ends Black's miserable existence by **1.Rxg7+ Kh8 2.Rg8+!** Note that 2.Rxf7+ fails to 2...Qxb2+!. **2...Kxg8 3.Rg1 mate** (a CLEARANCE SACRIFICE).

Réti's Mate

Diagram 159 shows the type of position that makes up RÉTI'S MATE.

(159)

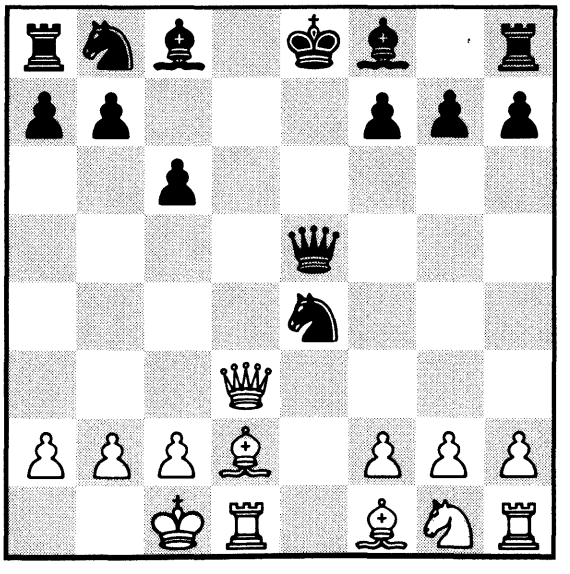


(The Bishop and Rook have exterminated the Black King)

This is an odd mate, made possible by Black's own pieces who have taken away several squares from their King.

In Vienna 1911, the game Réti-Tartakower (a blitz game) saw the following position appear on the board.

(160)



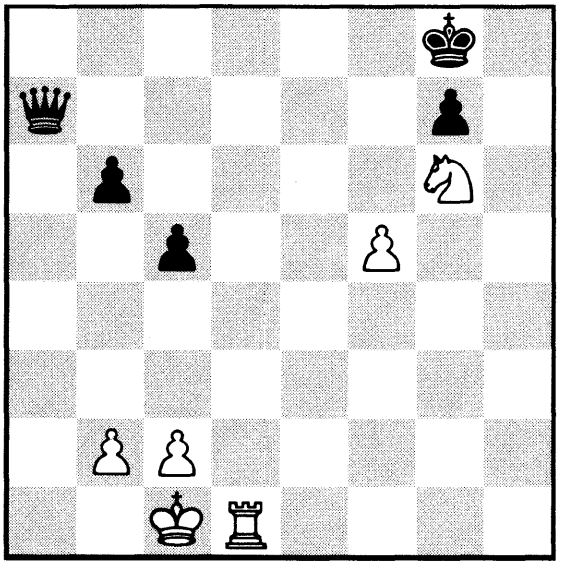
(White mates in three moves)

Do you recognize the pattern from the previous diagram? Réti forces that exact mate by **1.Qd8+!! Kxd8 2.Bg5+** A double discovered check! **2...Kc7** 2...Ke8 would allow 3.Rd8 mate. 3.Bd8 mate!

Rook, Knight and Pawn Mate

This mate often occurs in endgames and is extremely useful to know. The combination of pawn, Knight and Rook proves to be more potent than one might suppose.

(161)

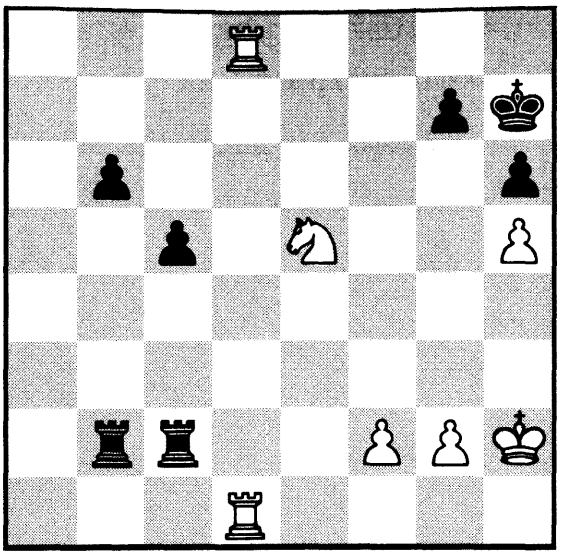


(White to move and mate in two)

White mates in two by **1.Rd8+** when **1...Kf7** is met by **2.Rf8 mate** and **1...Kh8** is finished off by **2.Rh8 mate**.

Another form of this mate can be seen in diagram 162.

(162)



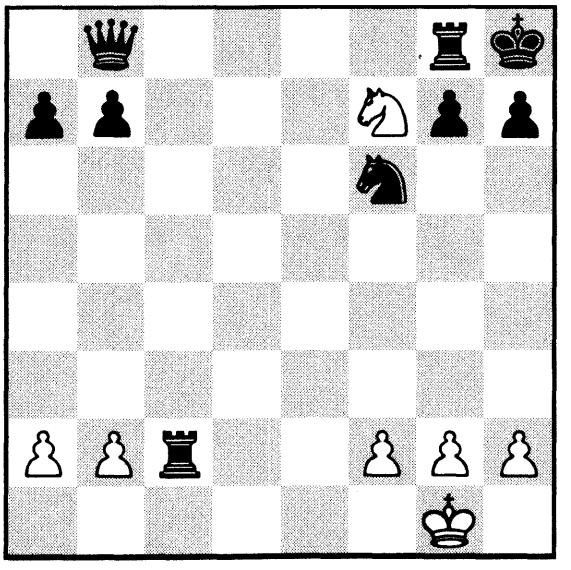
(Black's King is doomed)

White forces mate by **1.Ng6** when 2.Rh8 mate cannot be stopped.

Smothered Mate

This mate occurs when the enemy King has no legal moves due to the fact that it is surrounded on all sides by its own men. A Knight sneaks in, checks the poor King, and delivers mate (see diagram 163).

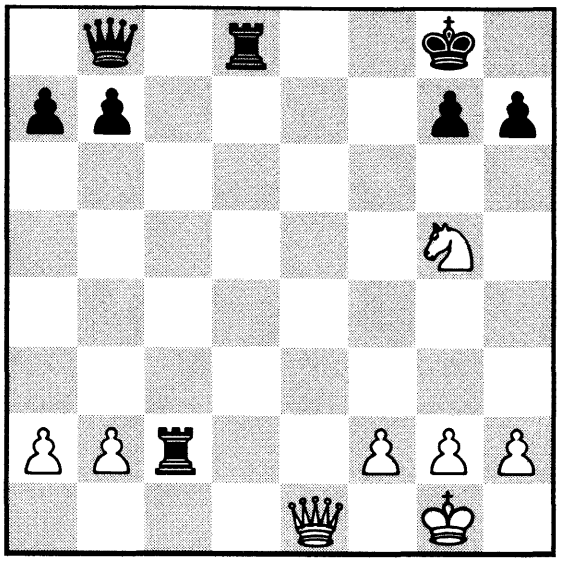
(163)



(Too much affection from its own pieces leads to the Black King's demise)

One of the most satisfying mates to deliver, it is usually created by a nice Queen sacrifice.

(164)



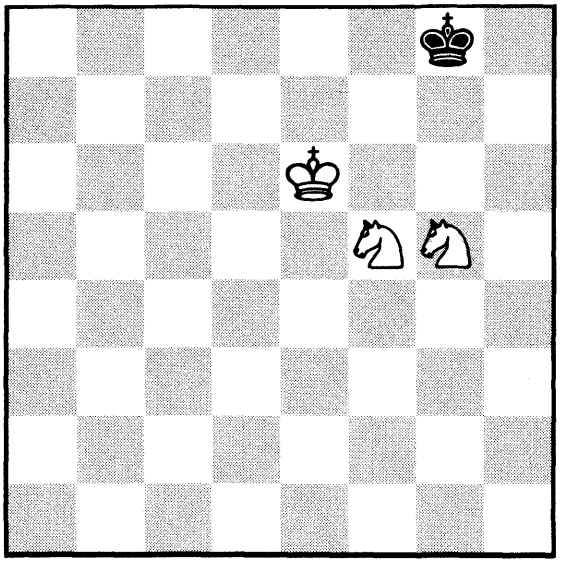
(White to move and mate in five)

The following moves are well worth remembering. You will almost certainly get to emulate them at some point in your chess career: **1.Qe6+ Kh8** And not 1...Kf8 2.Qf7 mate. **2.Nf7+ Kg8 3.Nh6+ Kh8 4.Qg8+!!** This forces a Black piece to hug its King a little too tightly. **4...Rxg8 5.Nf7 mate**.

Two Minor Piece Mate

One of the most unjust things in chess is the fact that two Knights and King can't force checkmate against a lone enemy King.

(165)



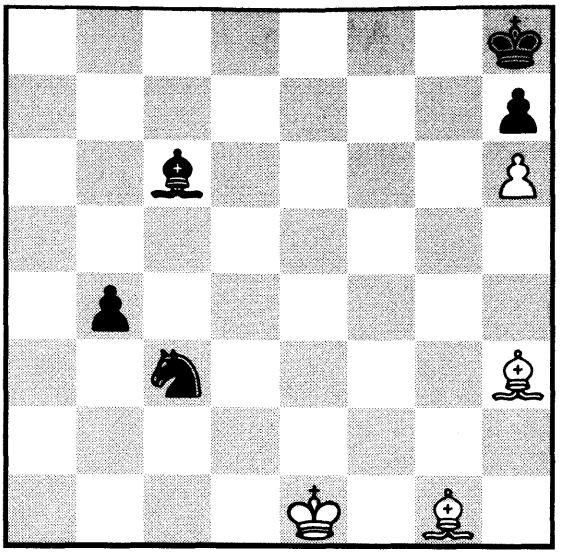
(Two pieces up and nowhere to go)

White can't force the enemy King to a mating square due to the possibility of a stalemate.

In the middlegame, there are many mating patterns that successfully employ two minor pieces to deliver mate. Since two Knights don't work together well, the vast majority of these positions concerns two Bishops or a Bishop and Knight. Let's take a quick look at some samples of both mixtures:

1) TWO BISHOP MATE—Two Bishops form a very strong team and it should not come as a surprise that they can checkmate the enemy King.

(166)

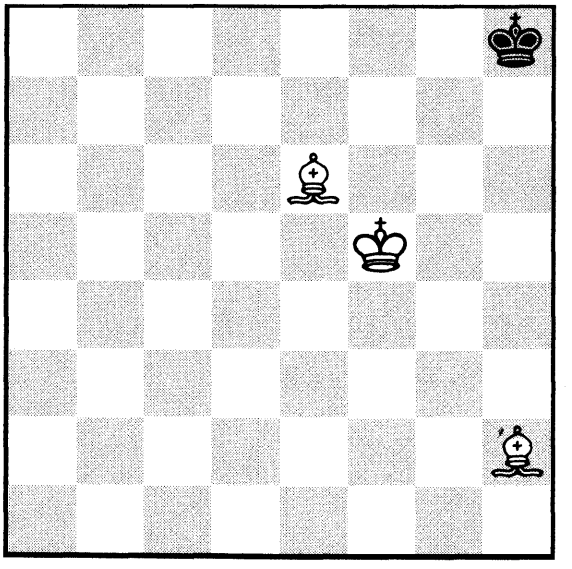


(Forming a mating net with the two Bishops)

In diagram 166 White forces mate with **1.Be6!** This stops the King from running to g8. **1...Nb5** Stopping 2.Bd4 mate. **2.Bh2** when nothing can prevent 3.Be5 mate.

Of course, the Bishops needed help (the pawns on h7 and h6), and this help is also critical in an endgame of King and two Bishops versus lone King (the King must work with the two Bishops). As is common in most attacking positions, White must utilize as many of his pieces as possible to force a decision.

(167)

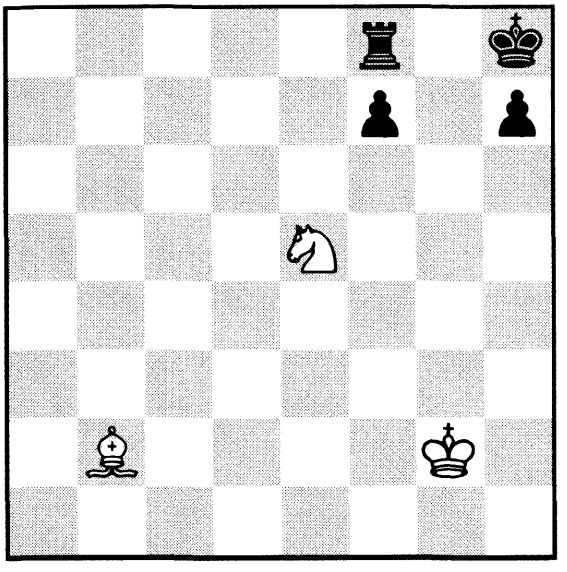


(All of White's pieces must participate)

White's King is put to work (in diagram 167) by **1.Kf6** Taking the g7-square away from the Black King. **1...Kh7 2.Bf4** Now Black's King can't move to h6. **2...Kh8 3.Kf7** The White King takes control over both g8 and g7. **3...Kh7 4.Bf5+ Kh8 5.Be5 mate**.

2) KNIGHT AND BISHOP MATE—Though not as strong as two Bishops, this pair of unmatched pieces can do the job as long as another unit (even an enemy pawn) helps them take a square away from the Black King.

(168)

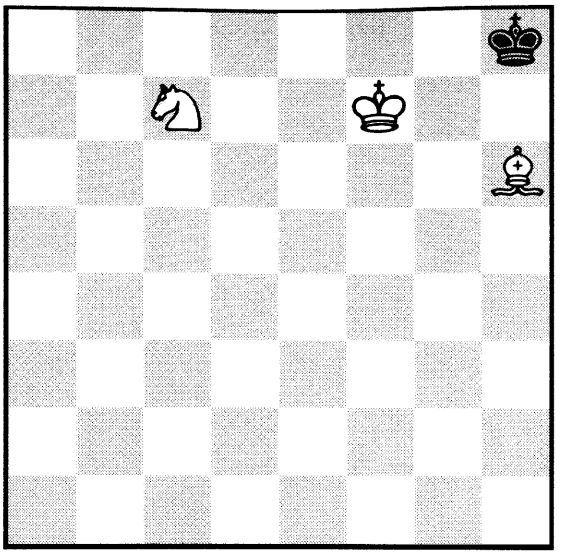


(There are a couple ways to mate in two)

White mates by either **1.Ng6+ Kg8 2.Ne7 mate** or **1.Nxf7+ Kg8 2.Nh6 mate**.

Naturally, in a King, Bishop and Knight versus King endgame, the attacker's King must also get into the act. Another important rule states that a mate can only be forced if the defender's King stands in a corner that is the same color as the Bishop.

(169)



(Black's King has been herded to the correct corner)

The h8-square is the same color as White's Bishop. This means that a mate will soon come about by **1.Nd5** Heading for f6. **1...Kh7 2.Bf8** And not 2.Bg7?? stalemate. **2...Kh8 3.Bg7+ Kh7 4.Nf6 mate**.

Sacrifice

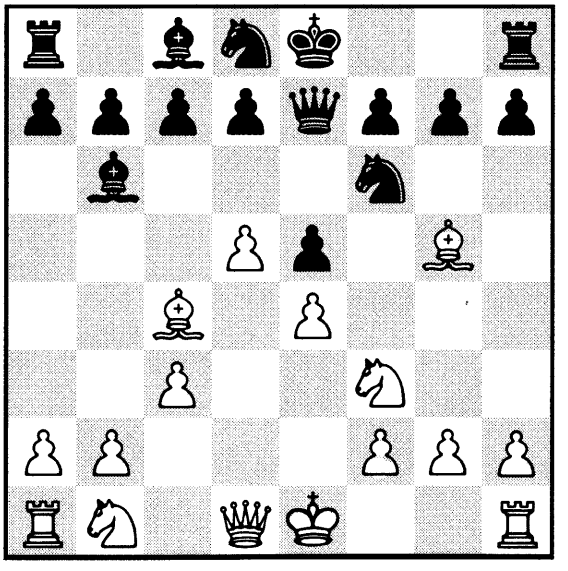
Purposely giving up material to achieve some goal (giving away material with no goal in mind is known as "insanity") is known as a SACRIFICE. Some sacrifices are played to achieve tactical or dynamic compensation, while other sacrifices are played to gain some form of positional compensation.

It is interesting to note that a combination must always have a sacrifice in it, but a sacrifice does not have to be part of a combination—it can stand on its own.

There are no specific rules that will tell you whether a pure (non-combinational) sacrifice will work or not. This makes true sacrifices extremely difficult to judge, compared to combinations (which can be worked out to the end).

In diagram 170 White has the possibility of a pawn sacrifice that is purely positional in nature (and therefore can't be calculated or verified in a tactical manner).

(170)



(A positional pawn SACRIFICE)

White gains the advantage with **1.d6!** This fine move gives White control over the d5-square and entombs the Black Bishop on c8. **1...cxd6** Worse is 1...Qxd6 2.Qxd6 cxd6 3.Bxf6 gxf6 4.Nh4 when White's control over the f5 and d5-squares leaves Black in

a bad way. **2.Na3** Threatening to jump into b5. The tempting 2.Nh4?? failed to a little combination that is based on the undefended Bishop on g5: 2.Nh4?? Bxf2+! 3.Kxf2 Nxe4+ with a double attack against f2 and g5. **2...a6 3.Nc2** Threatening Nc2-b4-d5. **3...Bxf2+ 4.Ke2!** And not 4.Kxf2?? Nxe4+ followed by 5...Nxg5. **4...Bc5 5.Nh4 Ne6 6.Nf5 Qf8 7.Bxf6** when his control over the f5 and d5-squares, combined with his pressure against d6, gives White a huge plus.

Recommended books on sacrifice include: *The Art of Sacrifice in Chess* by Rudolf Spielmann and *The Modern Chess Sacrifice* by Leonid Shamkovich.

Tactical Vision

TACTICS are maneuvers that take advantage of short-term opportunities. They can support your strategy and/or destroy your opponent's plans and ideas.

Since the best laid plans of mice and men can be obliterated by a single missed tactic, the ability to calculate deeply is highly prized in chess (tactical and combinational themes must also be mastered). Unfortunately, while positional concepts can be studied and mastered, quick tactical vision is much harder to acquire.

The best way to improve your tactical vision is to play over the first 10-15 moves of an annotated master game (*My Best Games of Chess 1908-1937* by Alekhine or *My Best Games* by Karpov are excellent for this purpose). Take the winner's side and cover up the moves. Then try and guess each subsequent move. Write all your positional and tactical thoughts down in a notebook, and only when you have done your very best should you look to see what was actually played. Make the game continuation on your board, trot out the opponent's move also, and then go through the whole process again while looking for your "hero's" next move (it is also a good idea to write down the time consumed for each decision).

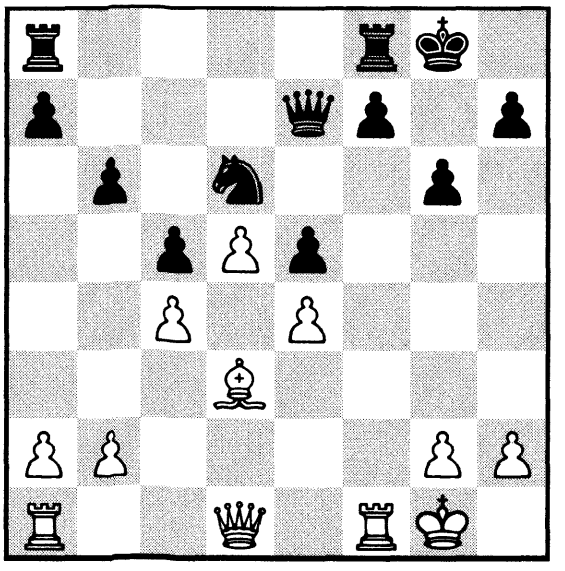
Do this at a comfortable pace (you don't want to lose your concentration) and put a lot of energy into this training technique. When the game is complete, carefully compare your notes with those of the master. You will be amazed how much you learn by doing this, and how repeated efforts will turn your mind into a razor-sharp calculating tool.

For more on this subject, check out Alexander Kotov's classic book, *Think Like a Grandmaster.* The more modern *Secrets of Chess Tactics* by Dvoretsky is also excellent, but watch out: both books are very advanced and may seem quite daunting to beginners (even experienced tournament players have complained that these books are "over their heads").

BLOCKADE

This very useful concept alludes to the immobilization of a pawn that, if allowed to advance, would cause you some problem. In general, the best BLOCKADERS are Knights due to their ability to jump over other pieces (i.e., the pawn it is blocking won't restrict its mobility).

(171)

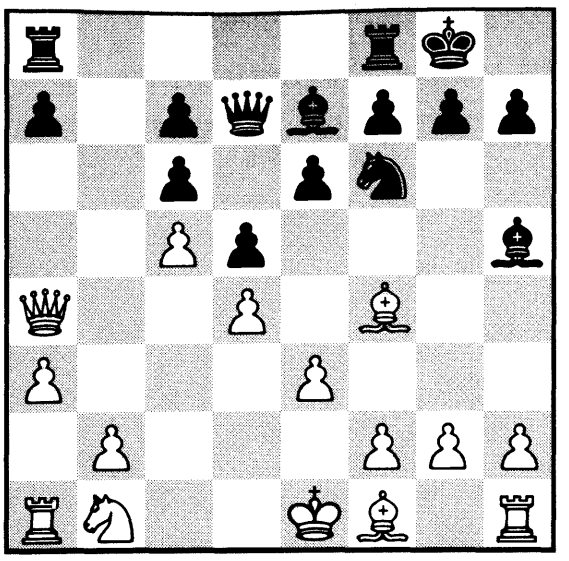


(The Knight as ideal BLOCKADER)

White's passed d-pawn isn't going anywhere at all. The Knight on d6 has stopped it in its tracks and, simultaneously, is also placing pressure against the defending pawns on c4 and e4 (see Passed Pawns, page 251, for more on this theme).

Kings tend to be fine blockaders in endgames and, of course, other pieces can also take on the blockading job if the need arises in any phase of the game.

(172)

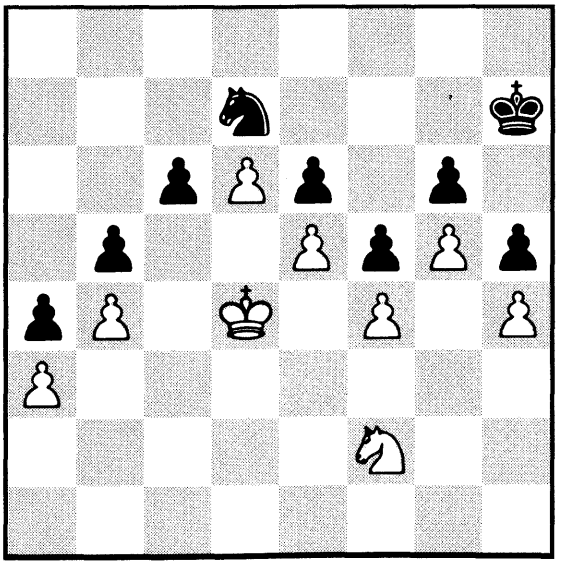


(White to play and BLOCKADE)

In diagram 172 (from the game Nimzovich-Vidmar, Carlsbad 1907) we see an example of a Bishop blockade: White fixes (blockades) the enemy a-pawn by **1.Ba6!** so that it can't gain queenside space with a later ...a7-a5. Black's a-pawn is a passive target on a7; why let it take a step towards freedom?

If you have a pawn that needs to be pushed, it is very important to either prevent a blockade from happening or, if that proves impossible, break it down once the opponent sets it up.

(173)



(White to play. Black can't maintain this BLOCKADE)

White tears down Black's blockade (in diagram 173) with **1.Nd3 Kg7 2.Nc5** when a Knight move (2...Nb6) allows 3.d7, while 2...Nxc5 3.Kxc5 leads to universal catastrophe.

CANDIDATE MOVES AND IMBALANCES

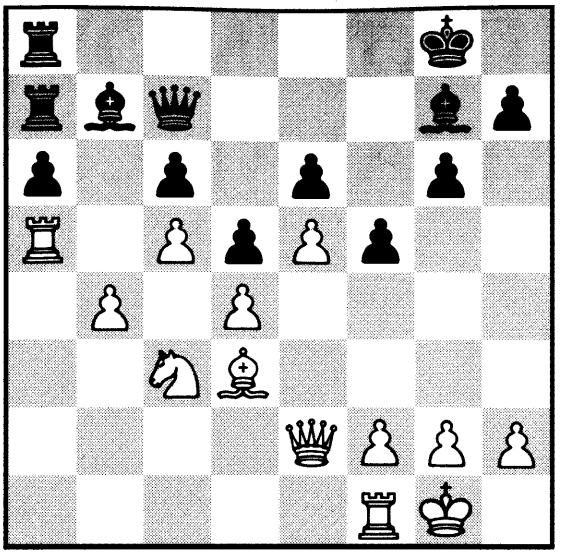
CANDIDATE MOVES refer to the moves you will analyze that cater to a particular goal or plan. When you are playing a game, you can't be expected to analyze every possibility. To avoid this fate, you have to trim back your options by looking at (and trying to make use of) the IMBALANCES on the board

Here is a list of imbalances (any difference between the respective positions):

1) Material.
2) Space.
3) Pawn structure.
4) Superior minor pieces.
5) Lead in development.
6) Initiative.

By listing the imbalances in any situation, you can often come up with a logical plan based on making use of the positive features in your position. Specific (candidate) moves will then be easy to find.

(174)



(White to play)

This position is an easy one to read. White has more queenside space, superior minor pieces (Black's Bishops are not happy in the closed position) and pressure against the weakness on a6. Since the majority of White's pieces are aimed at the queenside, and since White has a space advantage in that area and a ready-made target on a6, any moves he wishes to look at should have something to do with these facts.

The only candidate moves worth looking at would be **1.Rfa1** (brings more pressure to bear against a6) or **1.Na4** (bringing the horse to a great square on b6). Once White has listed his candidate moves he would analyze all of them and play the one that he deems best.

In most positions you should not have more than three or four candidate moves to choose from.

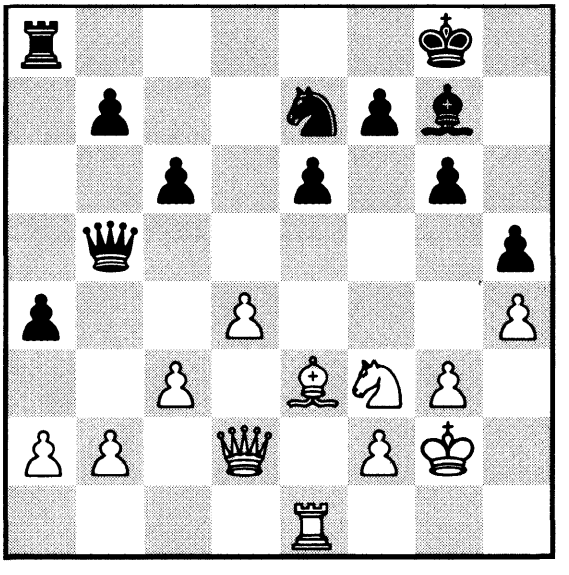
CENTRALIZATION

Good players are always concerned with placing their pieces on central squares; it's a mania with them. The reason for this is that a centrally placed piece is able to keep an eye on both sides of the board; it simply controls more squares in the center.

Amateurs tend to be more concerned with the sides of the board (especially the side where the enemy King lives). This preference hurts their growth as players and leaves them at a loss to understand why higher rated opponents beat them with such ease

Simply put: the center is the most important area on the board and, if there is any possibility of play in that sector, you should pursue it!

(175)



(Get those pieces to the center!)

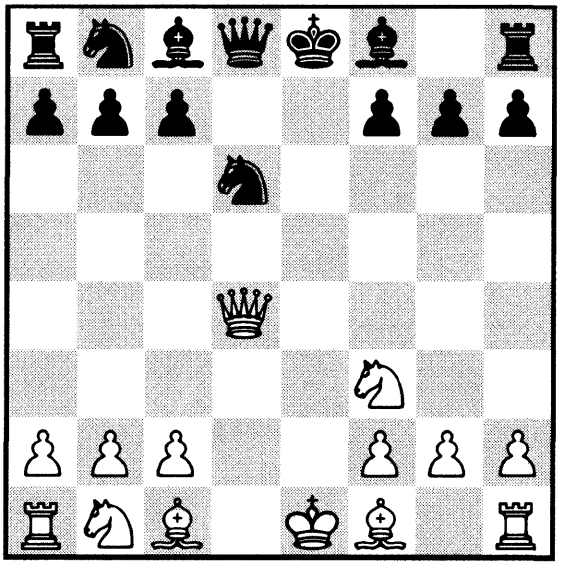
In diagram 175 two simple CENTRALIZING moves highlight Black's advantage by maximizing the activity of his Queen and Knight: **1...Qd5!** Attacking a2 and pinning the f3-Knight. **2.a3 Nf5** and White's position is uncomfortable.

CLOSED AND OPEN POSITIONS

The location of the center pawns determines whether a position is CLOSED or OPEN.

An OPEN position gets its name because the center is not blocked by pawns (thus the files and diagonals are "open").

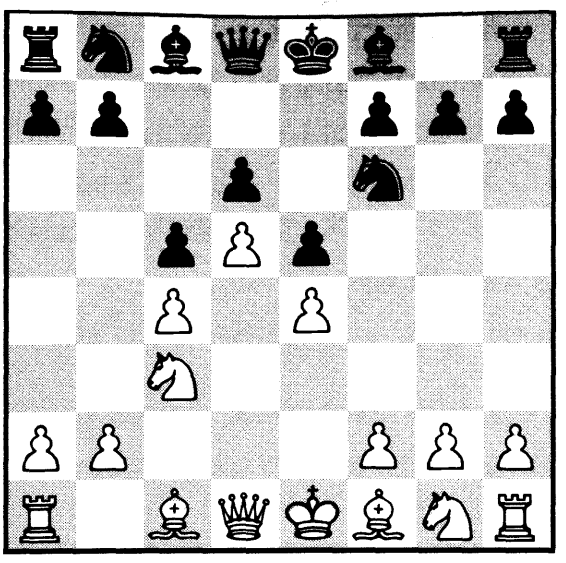
(176)



(A wide-OPEN center)

A CLOSED position gets its name because the center is filled with pawns that are locked together. These pawns block files and diagonals and, as a result, limit the activity of most of the pieces.

(177)



(A CLOSED center)

When the center is open, the following rules are useful to follow:

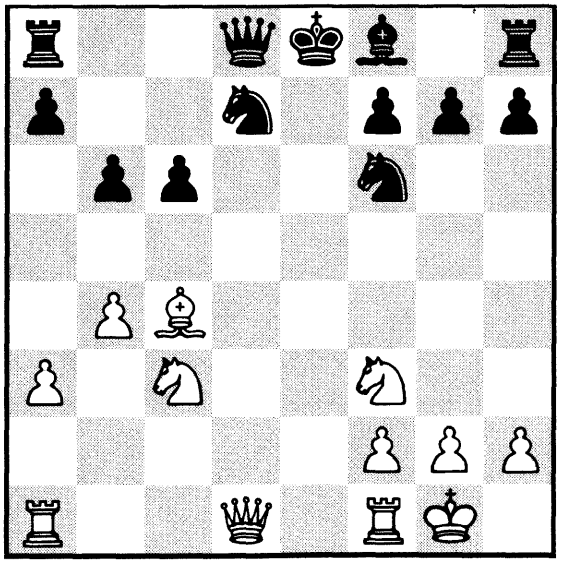
1) Piece activity abounds. Most attacks in open positions are piece oriented; pawns play a secondary role.

2) Try and direct play towards the center.

3) Time is very important. Because pieces can often leap into the enemy position in a single bound, every tempo must be used and nurtured. It is very dangerous to fall behind in development!

4) It is suicidal not to castle quickly when the center is open.

(178)



(Black's central King will lead to his demise)

In diagram 178 White enjoys a lead in development; he will also delight in taking aim at the uncastled enemy King. These factors far outweigh Black's extra pawn: **1.Ng5** Also crushing are 1.Re1+ Be7 2.Qe2, keeping the Black King in the center, and 1.Qb3, picking up f7. **1...Ne5 2.Re1 Qxd1+ 3.Raxd1 Nfd7 4.Nxf7** with mass slaughter.

A closed center has its own rules and strategies:

1) Piece movements tend to be somewhat ponderous due to the fact that pawns are in their way.

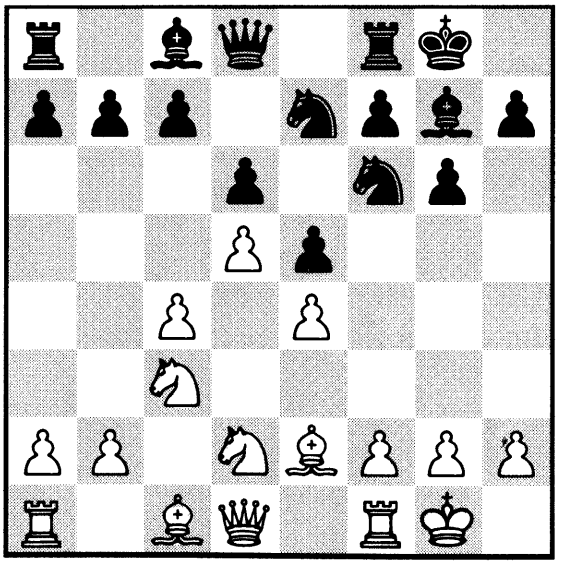
2) When the center is closed, direct play towards the wings.

3) Most attacks in closed positions should be initiated by pawns. Pushing your wing pawns gains space in that area and also helps to open files for your Rooks.

4) Play on the wing where your pawns point. This is where your space advantage lies and this is where you should seek your destiny.

5) Development and castling can be delayed in closed positions because the locked pawns separate both armies and make quick strikes uncommon.

(179)



(Time for some good old-fashioned wing expansion!)

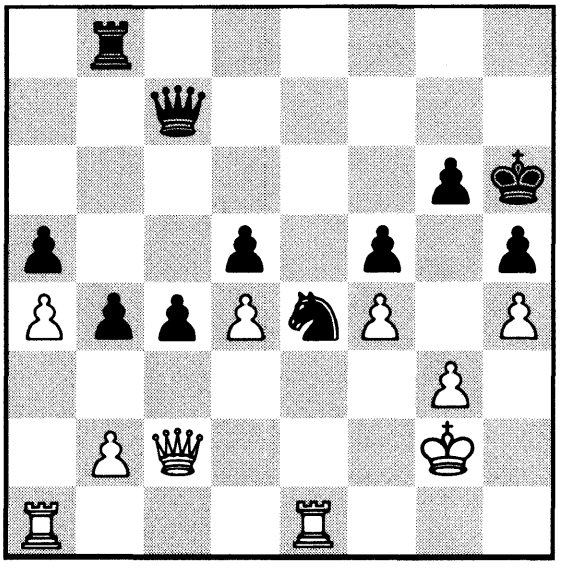
In diagram 179 Black's pawns point towards the kingside while White's point towards the queenside. Black will expand (at some point) by ...Nd7 and ...f7-f5 (gaining space and getting the f8-Rook into the game). White will strive for open queenside lines by b2-b4 followed by c4-c5.

COMPENSATION

Chessplayers are always saying, "I have COMPENSATION for this or compensation for that." It sounds very impressive, but many of us aren't really clear what this means.

If you give up something (SPACE, STRUCTURAL WEAKNESSES, SQUARES, MATERIAL, etc.) and get nothing in return, you are (to put in bluntly) in trouble. However, if you give up one of those imbalances (space, structural weaknesses, squares, material, etc.) in exchange for a different type of imbalance, you are said to have compensation for whatever it is that you gave up (you trade kingside space for the superior pawn structure; you sacrifice a pawn for a lead in development, etc.).

(180)



(Superhorse)

Black is down an Exchange for a pawn but the closed position (good for the Knight and bad for the fileless Rooks), his wonderful Knight and dynamic queenside pawns give him all the chances. In other words, Black has far more than enough compensation for the sacrificed Exchange.

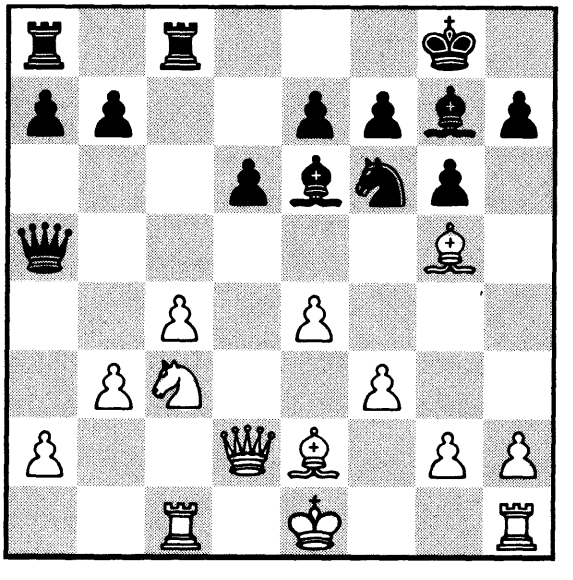
COUNTERPLAY

Nobody wants to get pushed around or dance to the opponent's tune. When you feel that this is about to happen, it is very important to try and find a way to get some COUNTERPLAY (i.e., creating your own aggressive action).

Though some positions require patient defense (in other words, you have nothing better to do than try and hang on), the idea of opening a new front (create play in a new area of the board) is something that should always be on your mind.

At times this counterplay needs only a few preparatory moves to become reality, at other times a sacrifice might be called for. Either way, it's well worth the tempos spent or the material given up to get your own plans in action.

(181)



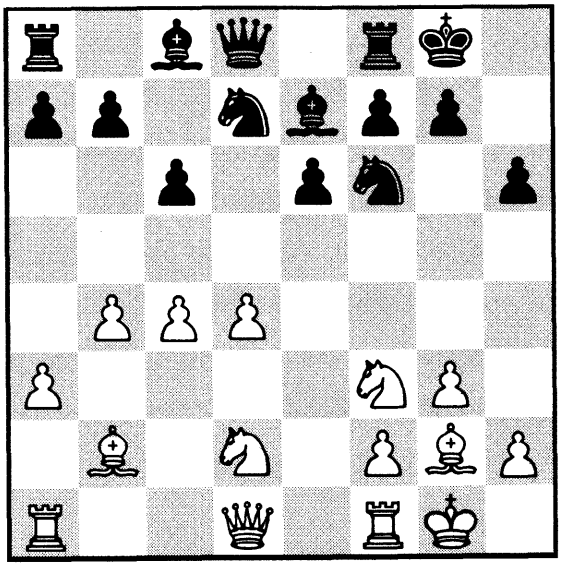
(Black prepares to break free)

White's pawns on c4 and e4 have created a central bind. If Black wants to break this and gain some active play, he has to lash out with either ...b7-b5 or ...d6-d5. In the present position, **1...a6** Preparing for ...b7-b5. **2.0-0 b5!** forces White's hand with

3.Nd5 Poor is 3.cxb5 axb5 4.Bxb5? Rxc3! **3...Qxd2 4.Bxd2 Nxd5** when the game is equal.

If you are the guy with all the play, you have a responsibility to prevent your opponent's counterplay in any way you can. Instead of slugging every position out, picture yourself as a huge spider: tie him up, render him helpless and pick him apart at your leisure!

(182)



(Freedom denied!)

White has more space and more active pieces. Black could sit around and wait to be overrun. However, a much saner idea is to generate central counterplay with **1...b6**, intending to follow up with 2...Bb7 and 3...c5. Of course, White should not sit around and allow this to happen. After **1...b6** he could try **2.c5!**, putting an end to Black's dreams of a ...c6-c5 counter and annexing more space. Of course, White's c4-c5 advance does give up the d5-square, but that's a small price to pay if it stops Black from breaking free.

DEFENSIVE STRATEGY

Though it's always better to have the initiative, there will still come moments when we have run into various obstacles and find ourselves having to defend a difficult position. When this happens you must do the following things:

1) Don't lose heart! Vow to fight to the very last piece!

2) Almost every position has defensive resources. It's up to you to believe this statement and find them. Take this as a challenge, grab hold of your opponent with all four limbs and refuse to let go!

3) Don't play some cheap one move trap and, if the enemy sees it, resign. It's must better to play the move you would hate to see if you had his position. This kind of move usually involves some sort of dour defense where you insist that the opponent has to work for the point. Make him fight and prove his accuracy every inch of the way. You will be surprised how many lost positions can be turned into draws or even wins in this manner.

Compared to other subjects, there is not much in chess literature on defensive play. *The Art of the Middle Game* by Paul Keres and Alexander Kotov has a splendid section (by Keres) on defending difficult positions, and Andrew Soltis' *The Art of Defense in Chess* gives a detailed look at all elements of defensive strategy.

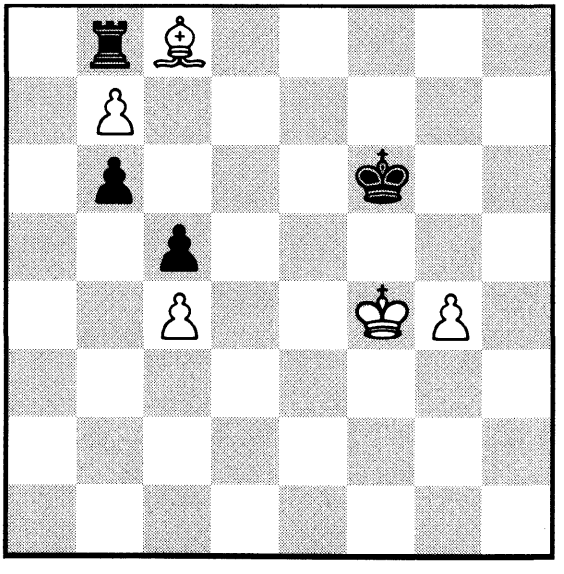
ENTOMBED PIECES

One of the most miserable fates you can suffer is to find yourself with an ENTOMBED piece. Such a piece has absolutely no mobility and no influence on the rest of the army. An entombed Bishop or a Knight may be worth three points in the world of POINT COUNT, but its actual value is far, far less.

Let's take a closer look at the different kinds of entombed pieces:

1) The entombed Rook usually comes about when an enemy Bishop and pawn tie it down to a square on the back rank.

(183)



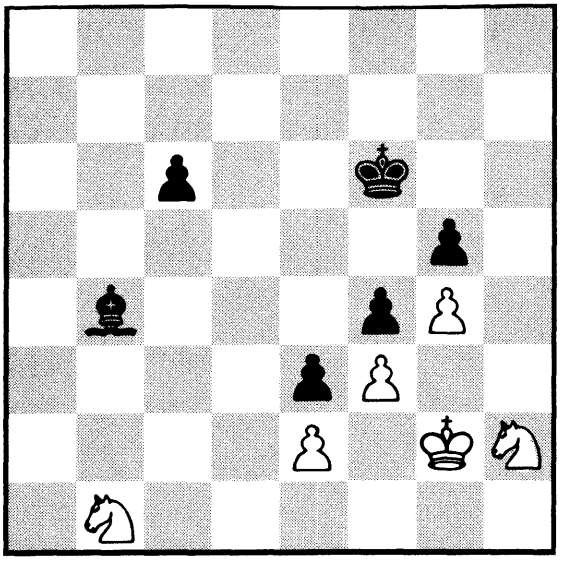
(An ENTOMBED Rook)

2) A Knight can become entombed by pawns (either your own or your opponent's), while enemy pieces (which take away its safe squares) can dominate it.

In diagram 184 all the Knights are in bad shape. The Knight on h2 can't escape from its kingside box. The

Knight on b1 is dominated by the b4-Bishop, which is making all its flight squares (on a3 and c3) inhospitable.

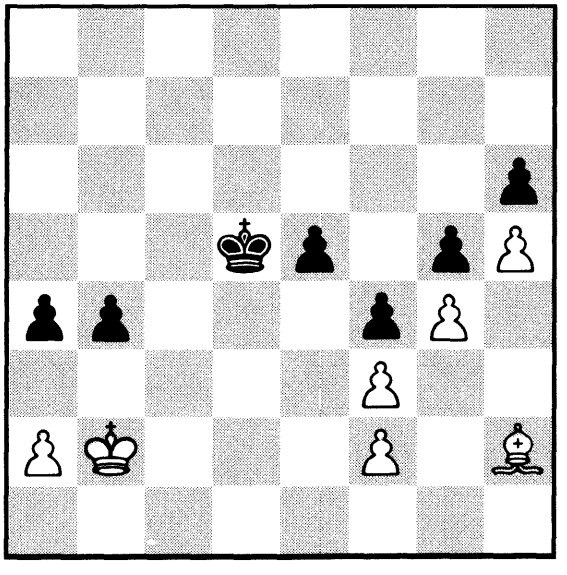
(184)



(Two ENTOMBED Knights)

3) A Bishop becomes entombed if pawns (your own or the opponent's) block its diagonals. In diagram 185 the Bishop will never get out of its box. Though White is a piece up, the endgame is hopeless for him!

(185)

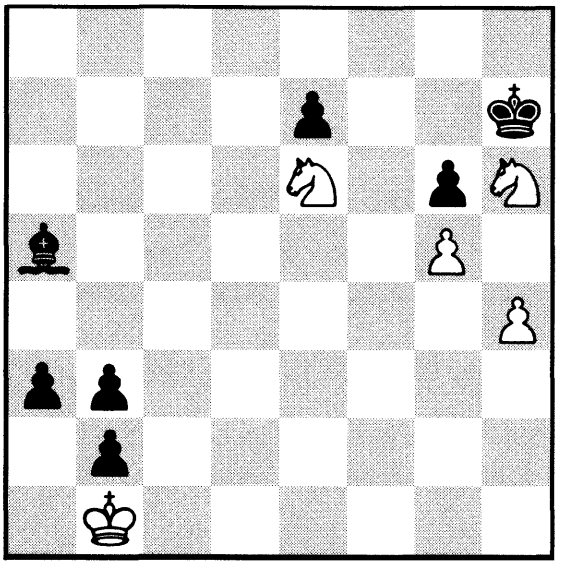


(An ENTOMBED Bishop)

4) The entombed King takes two forms: 1) a stalemated King (any check will be mate); 2) an imprisoned King.

In diagram 186 Black's King is imprisoned by the White Knights (it can only shuffle between h8 and h7). White's King is stalemated. Though both King's are entombed, White's turns out to be more vulnerable since Black to move would allow 1...Bc3 followed by 2...a2 mate while White to move still loses: **1.Nc5 a2+! 2.Kxb2 Bc3+! 3.Kxc3 a1=Q+**.

(186)



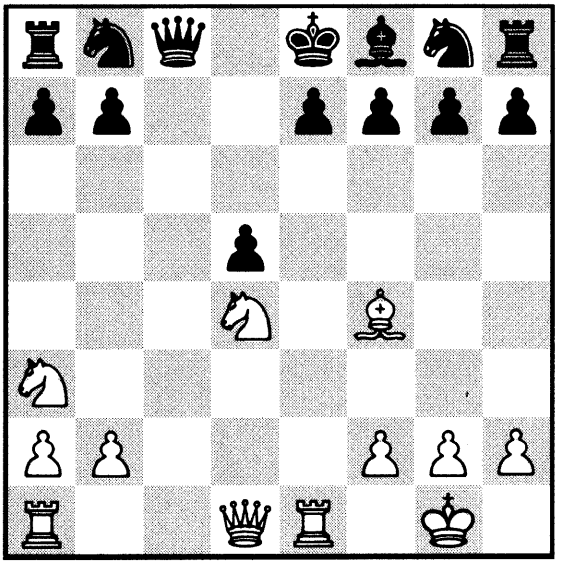
(Both Kings are ENTOMBED)

Entombed pieces are horrible, aren't they? Please, don't allow your own pieces to get stuck like this. Conversely, always be on the lookout for ways to imprison the enemy's units.

INITIATIVE

The side that forces its ideas on a reacting opponent is said to have the INITIATIVE. This control over a position can be based on dynamic or static considerations: If you are attacking a weak pawn and your opponent is busy defending it, you have an initiative based on a static advantage (this means that you can often play in a slow or calm manner because a static plus is long lasting). If you are using a lead in development to play for mate, you have the initiative based on a dynamic advantage (here you would play for immediate effect since dynamic pluses often dissipate with the passage of time).

(187)



(White has an overwhelming INITIATIVE for his two pawn investment)

The concept of initiative is a very important one in top flight chess, and both sides struggle for possession of it right out of the starting blocks. Gambits can be used to obtain it (though the price often turns out to be too high), a sudden attack can claim it,

or simple positional pressure can grab hold of it for the duration of the game.

This means that it is crucial not to mindlessly react to every threat or innuendo that your opponent throws your way. One step backward can easily turn into full-fledged retreat! Instead of playing a reactive game, try hard to make your ideas become realities, and don't take no for an answer!

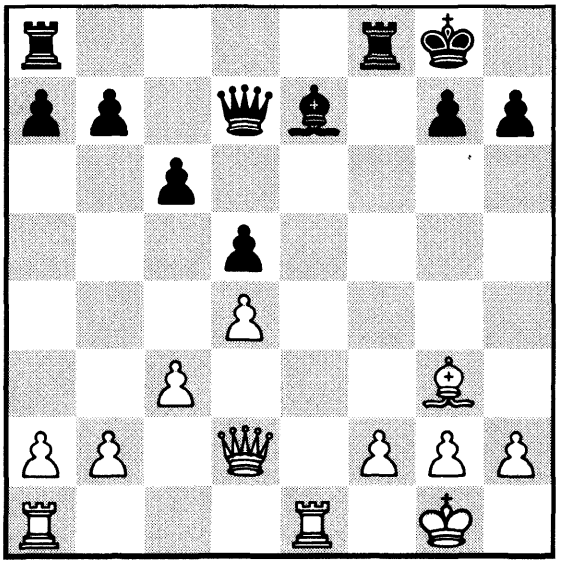
MATERIAL ADVANTAGE

A MATERIAL ADVANTAGE is a wonderful thing to have because it influences all phases of the game. In the opening and middlegame, the side with extra wood possesses more units of force—his army is larger. In the endgame, the side with the material deficit usually goes into a deep depression. In fact, this endgame nightmare is often felt in the middlegame; the material-down defender is basically giving endgame odds and this severely curtails his possibilities.

If you are fortunate enough to have a material plus, try to keep the following points in mind:

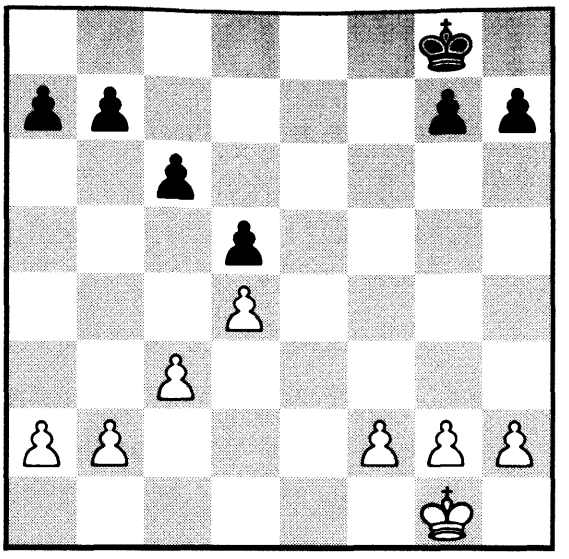
1) Most endgames will be in your favor. This means that trading pieces is an option that your opponent won't enjoy.

(188)



(Every piece that is traded brings Black closer to his doom)

(189)



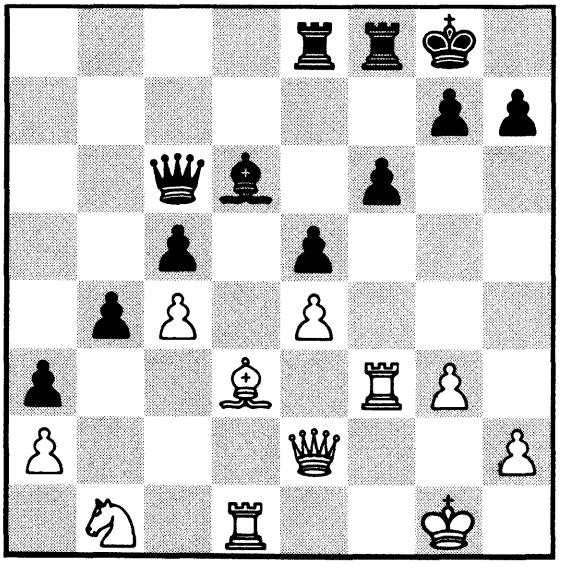
(Black is dead)

In diagram 188 we see a position that features an extra White pawn. This places Black in trouble, but he can still force his opponent to fight hard for the full point.

In diagram 189 we see the same position after several exchanges have removed all of the pieces. Black is now completely lost.

2) If you can make use of your extra unit of force, do so!

(190)

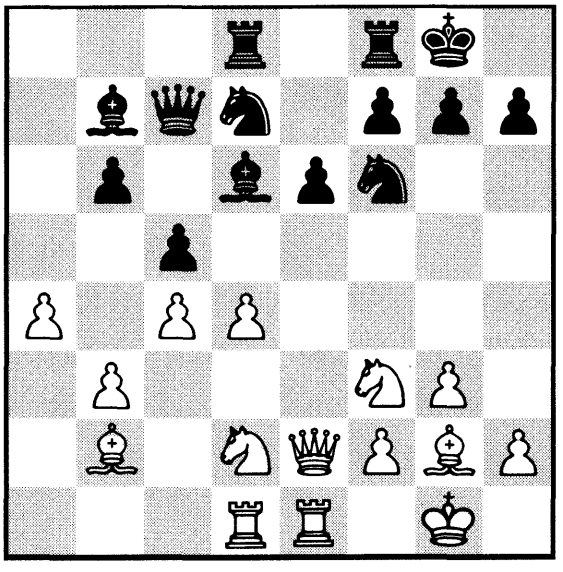


(Send the Knight on a sentimental journey)

In diagram 190 White is a piece for two pawns up, but the extra Knight is not doing anything on b1. Bring the poor beast back into play with Nb1-d2-f1-e3-d5. Once the Knight reaches the d5-square the game will virtually be decided.

3) If you can't make immediate use of your material plus, don't worry. That extra pawn will act as insurance, threatening your opponent's endgame chances for the rest of the game.

(191)

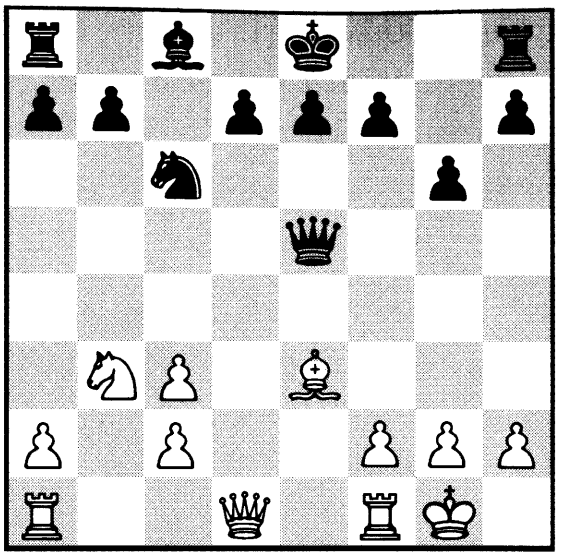


(Your extra pawn won't play a direct role for a long time)

In diagram 191 White's extra pawn isn't very useful at the moment, but it will eventually be a real endgame threat. Play a normal game (if you're White) and enjoy the fact that all endgames will favor you.

4) When you employ a plan that nets some extra wood, immediately bring all your pieces to squares where they work together and shore up all your weak points. Don't keep lashing out if your army is off balance!

(192)

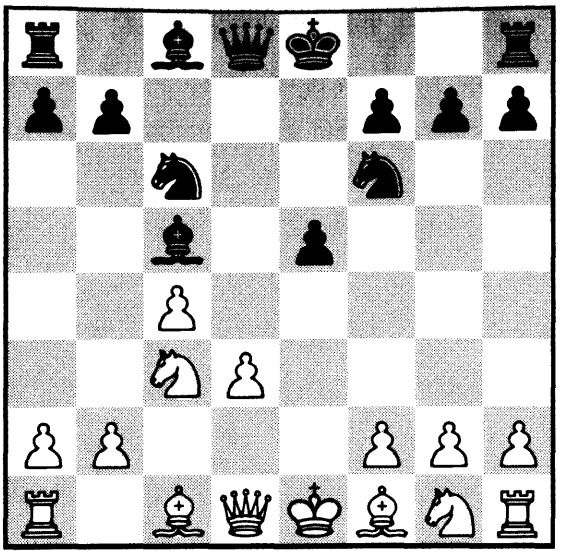


(Black's pieces need to regroup)

In diagram 192 Black's pieces are not working together at the moment. Before undertaking any aggressive action, Black should shore up his dark-squared weaknesses with ...f7-f6, catch up in development, get his Queen to a more comfortable post, and try to find a safer home for his King. He can consider a more aggressive campaign only when he manages to solve these problems.

If you are behind in material, you must seek some kind of compensation to justify the deficit. Some common forms of compensation are more active pieces, a lead in development, possession of the initiative, and extra space (diagram 193 is a good example of ample compensation for a pawn).

(193)

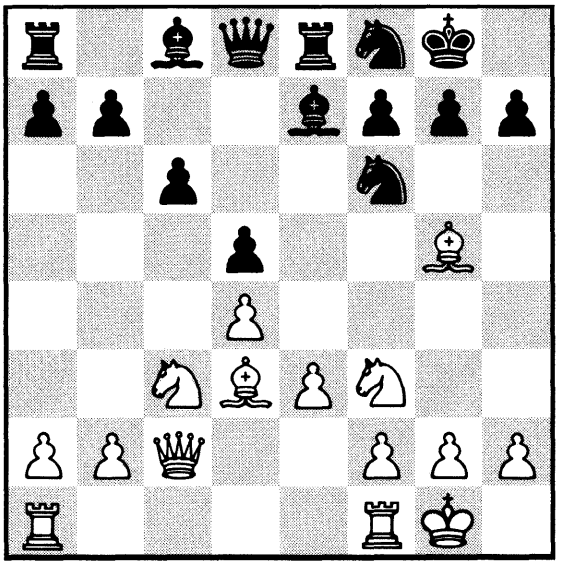


(Black's lead in development and control over the hole on d4 gives him ample COMPENSATION for the sacrificed pawn)

MINORITY ATTACK

This extremely useful strategic device remains an enigma to most amateurs. A MINORITY ATTACK is, in essence, an attack against a majority of pawns with a minority of pawns in the hope of creating weaknesses, holes and open files.

(194)



(White to play)

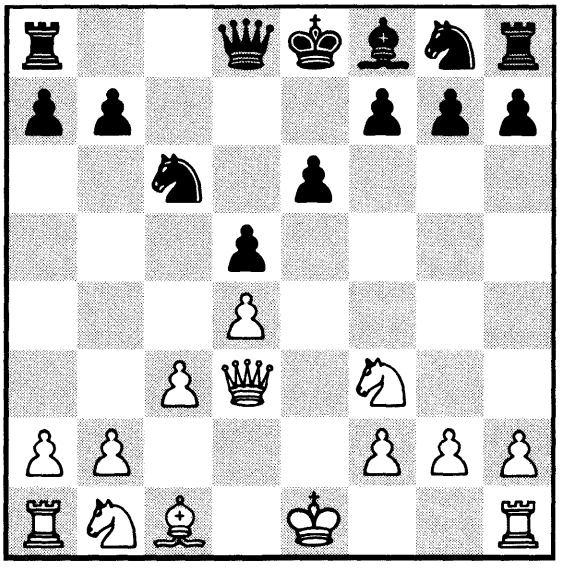
This position (arrived at by 1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.Nc3 Nf6 4.cxd5 exd5 5.Bg5 Be7 6.e3 0-0 7.Bd3 c6 8.Qc2 Nbd7 9.Nf3 Re8 10.0-0 Nf8) is a common starting point for the minority attack. The strange **1.Rab1!** might raise eyebrows among beginners, but its logic is crystal clear: White intends to advance his b-pawn to b5 and capture on c6. For example: **1...Ne4 2.Bxe7 Qxe7 3.b4 a6 4.a4** White's two queenside pawns charge directly at Black's three. **4...Bd7?** Too passive. Black should start an immediate kingside counterattack by 4...Ng6 followed by ...Bg4, ...Nh4, ...Ra8-d8-d6-g6. **5.b5 axb5 6.axb5 Ng6 7.bxc6 bxc6** when Black's c-pawn is weak for the rest of the game, the c5-square

will make a nice home for White's pieces, and the b-file will give White a convenient way to penetrate into the Black camp.

This kind of queenside attack is effective because it creates defensive problems right into the endgame; that backward c-pawn will continue to be a target until the pieces are placed back in their box.

The minority attack can be played by either side, as long as the pawn structure calls for it. For example, after the moves **1.e4 c6 2.d4 d5 3.exd5 cxd5 4.c3** Both 4.c4 and 4.Bd3 are superior alternatives. **4...Bf5 5.Nf3 Nc6 6.Bd3 Bxd3 7.Qxd3 e6** we reach the position in diagram 195.

(195)



(What are the plans for both sides?)

There isn't a lot of active play in the center and this allows both sides to pursue their dreams on the flanks. White's pawns point towards the kingside so that is the area where he should concentrate his forces. Black's pawns point to the other flank.

For Black to get any play on the queenside, he needs to open files and create targets. Once again, the plan of ...b7-b5-b4 screams to be noticed.

In the diagramed position, Black would first finish his kingside development with ...Nf6, ...Be7 and ...0-0. However, once that was taken care of he would launch into the minority attack with ...Rb8 and ...b7-b5.

Goals of the minority attack:

1) Creates an attackable weak pawn on the queenside.

2) Creates holes that your pieces can eventually occupy.

3) Creates open files so your Rooks can penetrate into the enemy position.

4) Gives you long-range static winning chances right into the endgame.

Goals of the defending side:

1) You must decide whether you will:

1.a) Be a masochist (play passively and just try to draw a long, painful game).

1.b) Be a leader of men (whip up a counterattack against the enemy King).

If you are in favor of plan 1.b. (in other words, you've decided to go for the throat), the following points might prove useful (see diagrams 194 and 195):

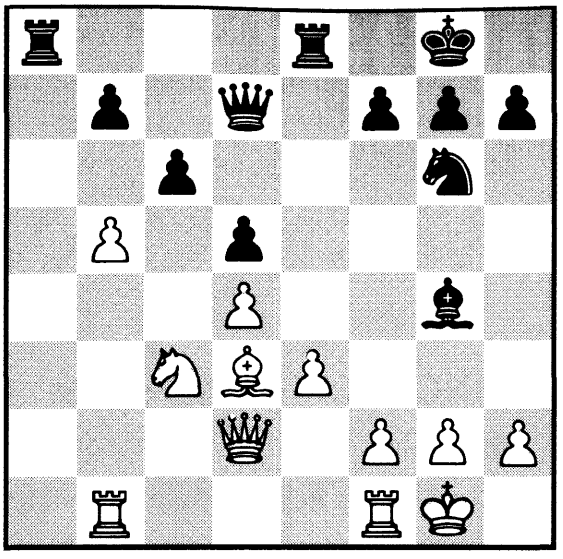
1.b.1) Avoid unnecessary exchanges (you want to retain as many attacking units as possible).

1.b.2) The g2 and h2-squares are your main targets.

1.b.3) Bringing a Knight to h4 (via ...Nb8-d7-f8-g6-h4) creates a lot of pressure against g2. This can be intensified by ...Qg5 and ...Bh3.

1.b.4) You can bring a Rook into the attack via ...Ra8-d8-d6-g6 (or h6). Also possible is ...Rf8-e8-e6-g6 (or h6). These Rook maneuvers have the double point of attacking the enemy King and defending c6 at the same time.

(196)



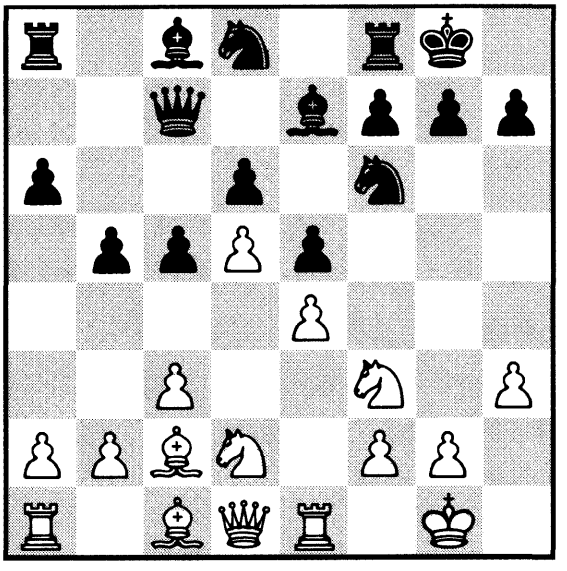
(Black starts thumping the g2-square)

White is clearly ahead on the queenside, so Black must react sharply on the other wing. The move **1...Nh4!** puts White under instant pressure. One example: **2.Rfe1? Bh3!** Black continues to strike against g2. Also good was 2...Bf3 when 3.Bf1 Nxg2! 4.Bxg2 Qg5 is crushing. After 2...Bf3 White has to play 3.g3. **3.Bf1** Both 3.g3 and 3.gxh3 lose to 3...Nf3+ forking White's King and Queen. **3...Qg5 4.f4 Nf3+ 5.Kh1 Nxd2 6.fxg5 Nxb1** and Black has a decisive material advantage.

MINOR PIECES

Knowing how the MINOR PIECES move won't enable you to use them in a proper way. To do this, you must know what pawn structures favor a Bishop, the advantages a Knight has over all the other men, what to play for and what to avoid.

(197)



(Where should the d2-Knight eventually go?)

The White Knight on d2 (where it blocks the Bishop on c1) should start a trek towards g3 via Nd2-f1-g3 (on g3 it defends e4 and eyes f5). Knights are not long-range pieces and have to slowly make their way to their best squares. Don't hesitate to expend the energy to get them there!

Did you know how to play the position in diagram 197? If not, pay special attention to the minor piece material that follows; an understanding of it will give you many fine victories and will help you avoid many miserable defeats.

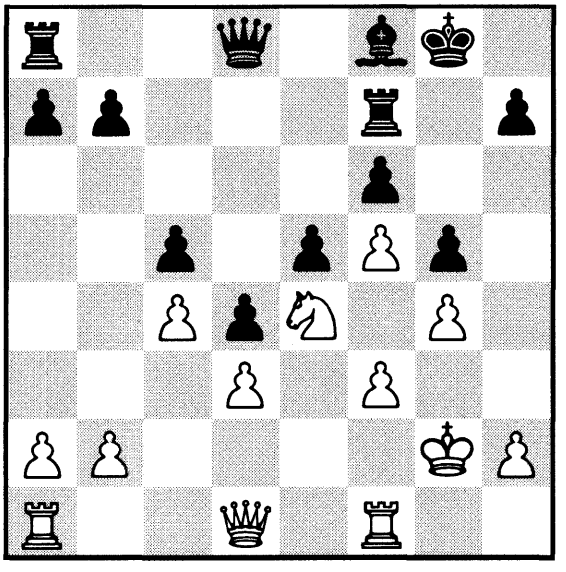
Those of you that wish to make a more detailed study of positional ideas would do well to purchase Pachman's *Complete Chess Strategy*, Silman's *How to Reassess Your Chess*, Euwe's *The*

Middle Game (books one and two), Agur's *Bobby Fischer: His Approach to Chess*, and Soltis' *Pawn Structure Chess*.

Battle of the Minor Pieces

The battle between Bishops and Knights is one of the most subtle and important in chess. A good player will invariably end up with a powerful Knight over a poor Bishop (or a powerful Bishop over a poor Knight) against his lower rated opponent. Then, when he plays someone stronger than himself, he will find that the situation is reversed and his minor piece is inferior to whatever his opponent owns. You will find that this "food chain" lacks any kind of mercy; only a deep understanding of the needs of both the Bishop and the Knight will allow you to keep your head above water in this turbulent fight.

(198)



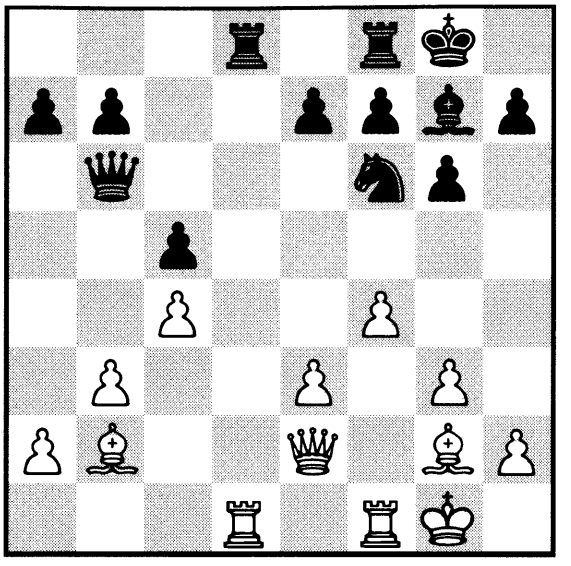
(The White Knight rules)

In general, you should be looking to create a superior minor piece right from the opening. If this doesn't happen, continue looking for your chance in the middlegame; being able to do this will often have decisive significance in the final stage of the game!

For example, if you exchange a Bishop for an enemy Knight by Bc1-g5xf6, you will want to make sure that the resulting position is favorable for Knights (i.e., the position is closed, support points exist for your horses, etc.). If the position (after

Bc1-g5xf6) is wide-open and lacks advanced support points, you should avoid the exchange like the plague and try to obtain Bishops instead!

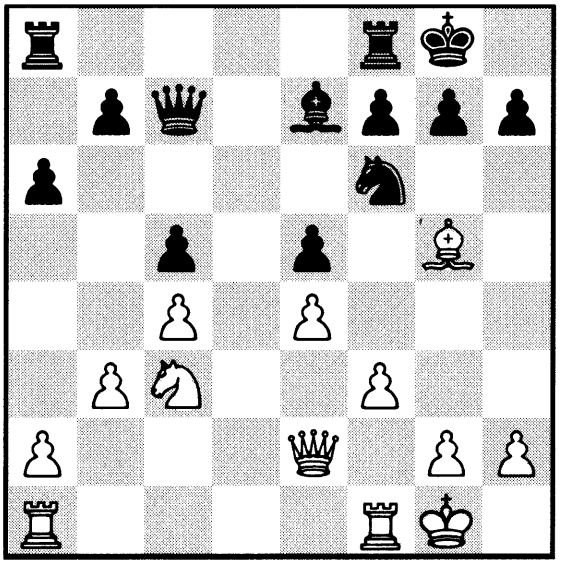
(199)



(A great position for Bishops)

In diagram 199 it would be insane to give up your b2-Bishop for the f6-Knight because the position is open and the Bishops are very strong.

(200)



(A great position for Knights)

Though we didn't want to give up Bishop for Knight in diagram 199, the position in diagram 200 is a very different story.

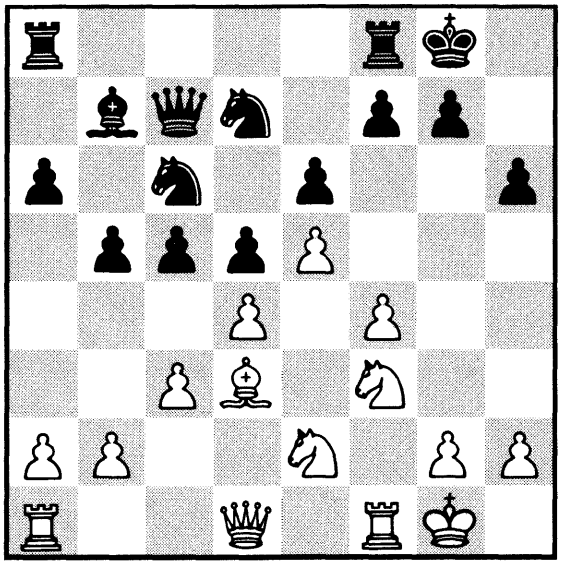
Here **1.Bxf6!** is very logical since **1...Bxf6 2.Nd5** leaves White with a far superior minor piece (the Knight is much stronger than the Bishop).

Laws of Bishops

There are three basic types of Bishops:

1) GOOD—A Bishop is considered good when its central pawns are not on its color and thus are not obstructing its activity.

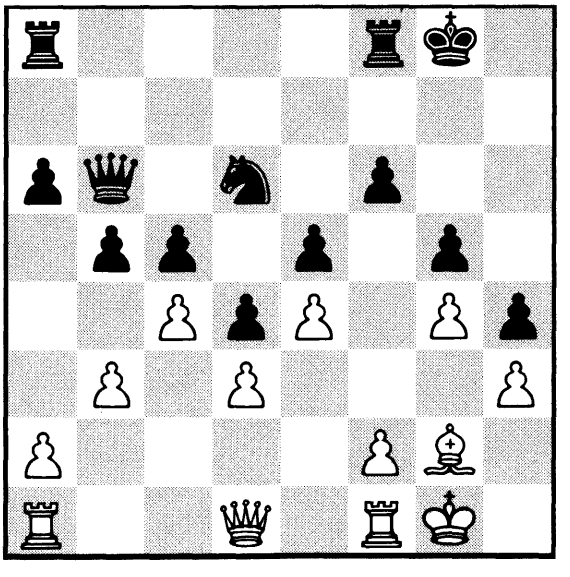
(201)



(A GOOD Bishop on d3)

2) BAD—A Bishop is considered bad when its central pawns are on its color and thus block it.

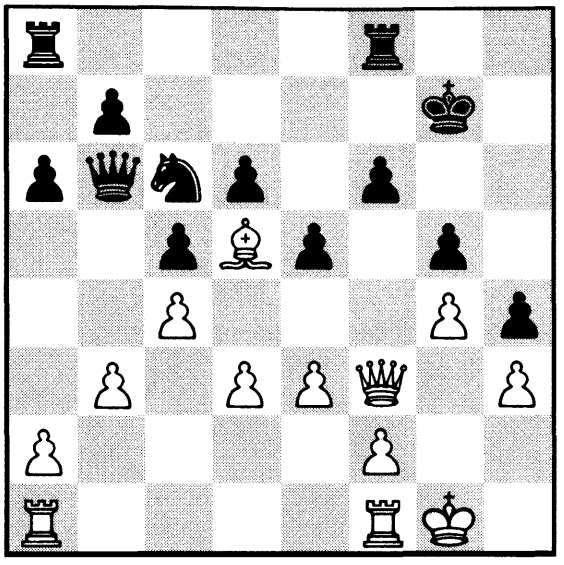
(202)



(A BAD, useless Bishop on g2)

3) ACTIVE—An active Bishop can be either good or bad; it's called *active* simply because it serves an active function.

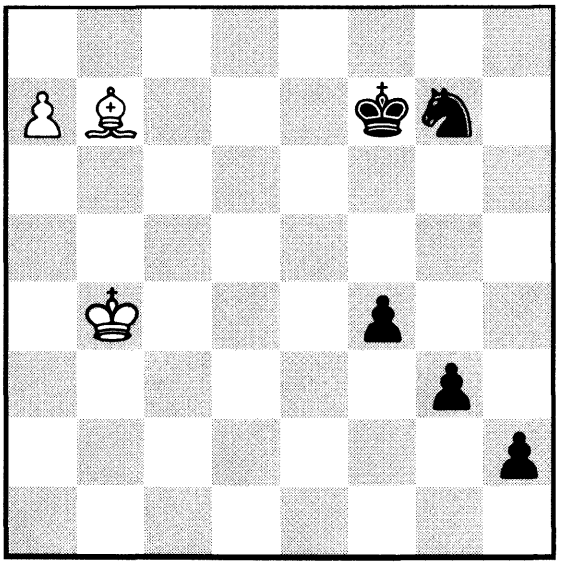
(203)



(A bad but active Bishop)

Bishops are long-range pieces and love wide-open positions that are free of central pawns. In the endgame they are great at stopping enemy passed pawns, which they can often do from the other side of the board.

(204)

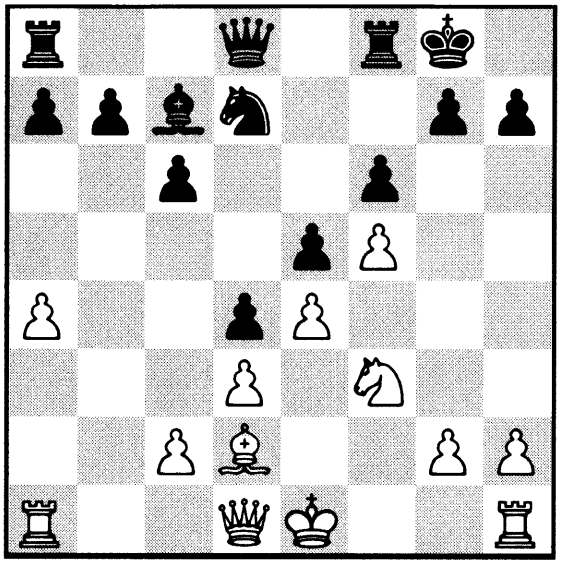


(The Bishop stops all the enemy pawns from a distance)

If you are unfortunate enough to possess a bad Bishop, you are usually well advised to do one of three things:

1) Trade the offending piece off for an enemy Bishop or Knight.

(205)

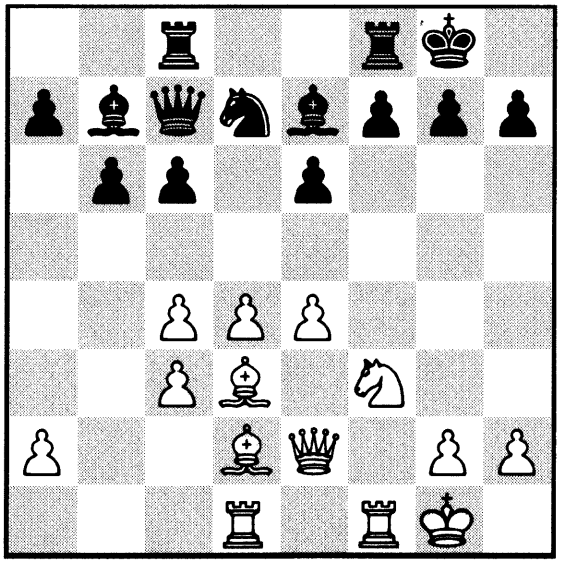


(Black's bad Bishop is traded off)

In diagram 205 Black plays 1...Ba5! and trades off his bad Bishop for White's good one.

2) Make it good by moving the central pawns off the color of your Bishop.

(206)

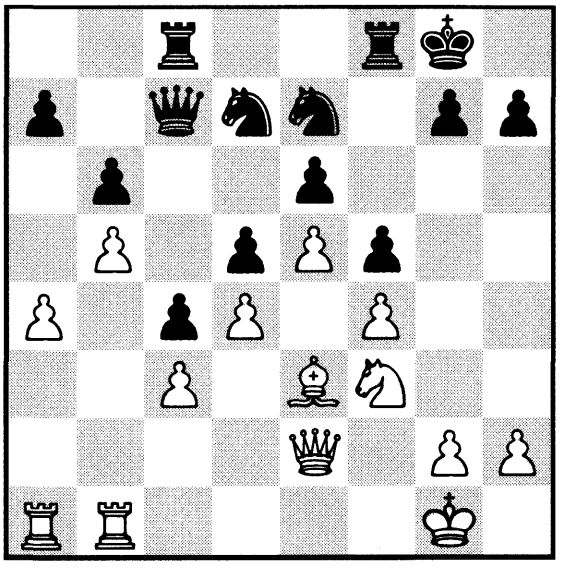


(A bad Bishop becomes good)

In diagram 206 White plays **1.e5**, which frees the b1-h7 diagonal and transforms the d3-Bishop into an excellent piece.

3) Make it active by getting your Bishop outside the pawn chain. Many games have been won by turning an impotent bad Bishop into a mighty active Bishop.

(207)



(Getting the Bishop outside the pawn chain)

White's Bishop is clearly bad. However, with **1.Bc1!** followed by **2.Ba3** White succeeds in making the Bishop extremely active by getting it outside the pawn chain.

Laws of Knights

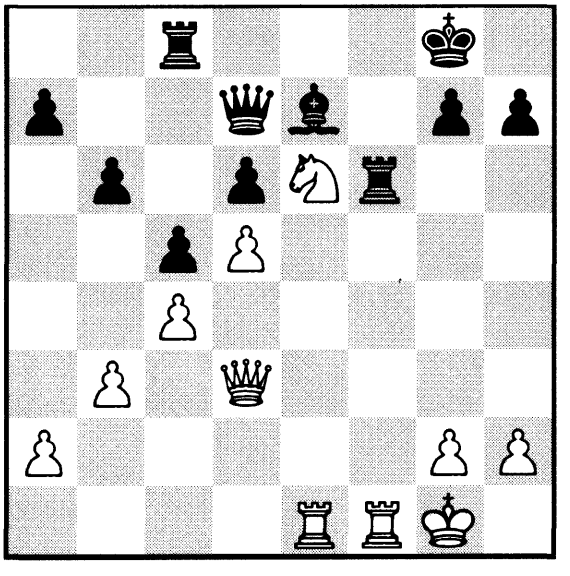
Knights are the only pieces that have the ability to jump over other men. This makes them very effective in closed positions, but vulnerable to Bishops in situations with no support points and wide-open diagonals (Steinitz said that the best way to beat Knights was to take away all their advanced support points).

If you want to make them effective, try to create the following situations for your horses:

1) Knights need advanced support points if they are going to compete successfully with Bishops.

   A support point on the sixth rank is ideal, while a Knight on the fifth is usually better than a Bishop. A Knight on the fourth is a very strong piece, but it gets weaker as it gets pushed back to the first rank (the first and second ranks are not good homes for a Knight and should only be used as a path to greener pastures).

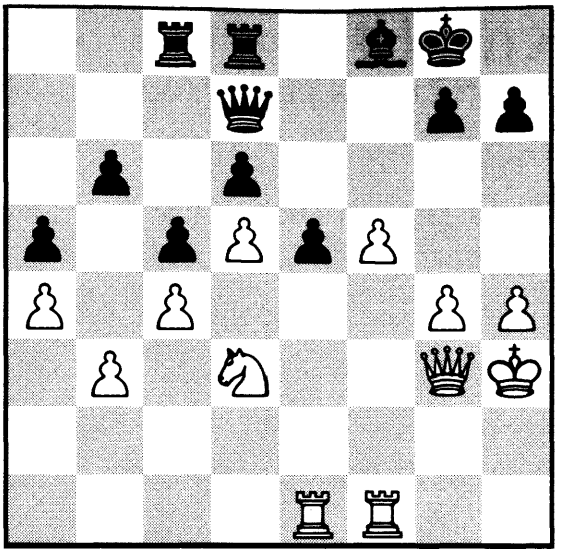
(208)



(The horse dominates the game from its sixth-rank perch)

2) Knights tend to be superior to Bishops in closed positions. A wall of pawns will completely shut a Bishop down, but a Knight will just jump over this wall and continue on its way.

(209)

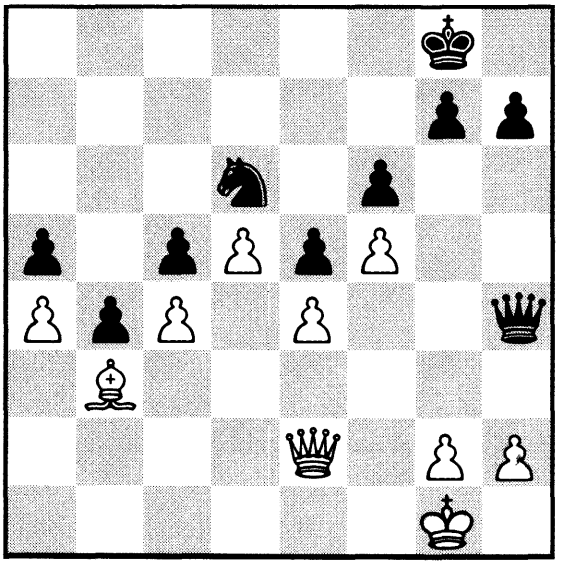


(The nimble Knight is king of closed positions)

White's Knight (in diagram 209) is flexible and happy. It will dominate the game after Nd3-f2-e4 where it eyes the d6-pawn, blocks Black's passed e-pawn, helps White's kingside majority advance, and also envisions possibilities like Ne4-g5-e6.

3) Knights are the best blockaders of passed pawns. A Knight can stop an enemy passer in its tracks and still remain active due to its ability to jump over other units.

(210)

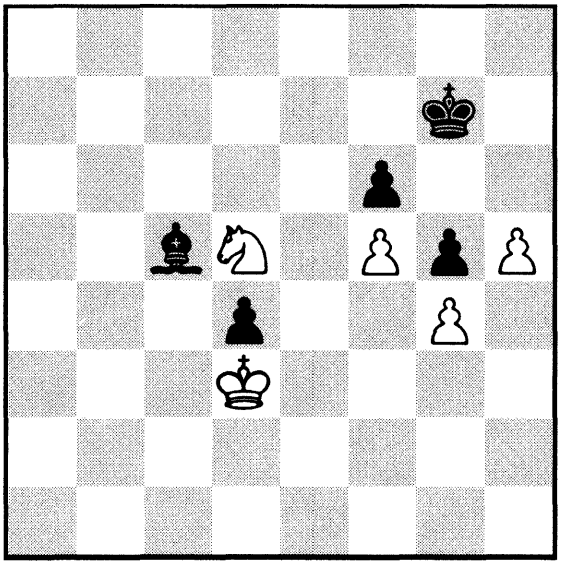


(Both sides blockade passed pawns)

In diagram 210 White's Bishop is blocking Black's passed pawn but it has virtually no activity or scope. On the other hand, Black's Knight is not only blocking White's passed pawn, it is also attacking the enemy pawns on e4 and c4. After **1.Bc2** (defending e4) **1...Qf4** Black's Queen will penetrate into the enemy position and cause White all sorts of trouble.

4) Knights are usually superior to Bishops in endings with pawns on only one side of the board. Such a position makes light of a Bishop's long-range powers, while the Knight's ability to go to either color (a Bishop is forever stuck on one color complex) becomes extremely valuable.

(211)



(The Knight is vastly superior to the Bishop)

In diagram 211 all the White pieces are immune from attack by the enemy Bishop. However, Black's pieces can easily be reached by the Knight (Nd5-c7-b5/e6xd4 picks up the d4-pawn).

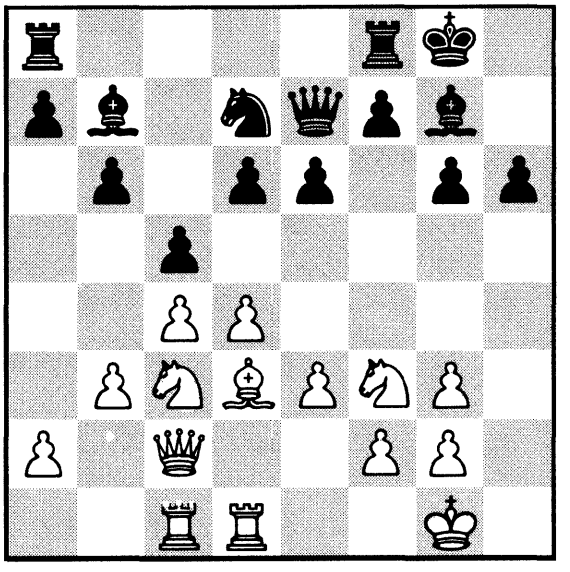
Two Bishops

One of the Bishop's largest flaws is the fact that it's stuck on one color for the whole game. This means that enemy units can hide out on the opposite color of the Bishop, staring defiantly at an opponent who seems to live in another dimension.

This problem, however, doesn't exist if you possess two Bishops. In that case both colors are patrolled and nothing on the board is safe from their malevolent gaze.

If your opponent owns two Bishops, a good rule is to trade one of them off (for a Bishop or a Knight), leaving him with just one, manageable Bishop. Naturally, if you own the two Bishops, do your best to avoid such an exchange.

(212)



(Black has two strong Bishops)

White to play should exchange one of the Black Bishops by **1.Be4!**.

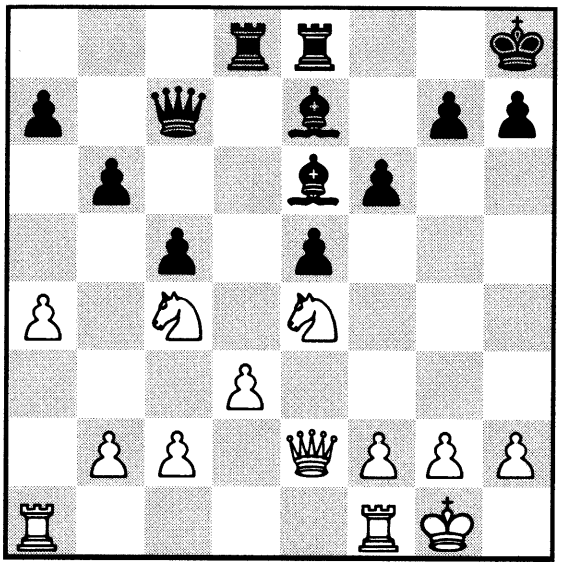
Black to play can avoid this exchange by **1...f5**.

Two Knights

Two Knights tend to work together poorly since they don't complement each other's powers (as two Bishops do) or compensate for each other's weaknesses.

The fact that a King and two Bishops versus a lone King is an easy checkmate while a King and two Knights versus a long King is only a draw speaks volumes about their working relationship.

(213)



(Two Knights that can be kicked around)

This position appears to be a reasonable one for the White Knights; the center is not wide-open and both horses have posts on the fourth rank. However, appearances are often deceiving. In the present case, the Knights can be chased back by ...a7-a6 followed by ...b6-b5 (getting rid of the c4-horse) and ...f6-f5 (getting rid of the e4-horse).

A much better pair (aside from the optimal two Bishops) is a Bishop and Knight; one does long-range duty while the other jumps over other units and has the ability to police squares of both colors.

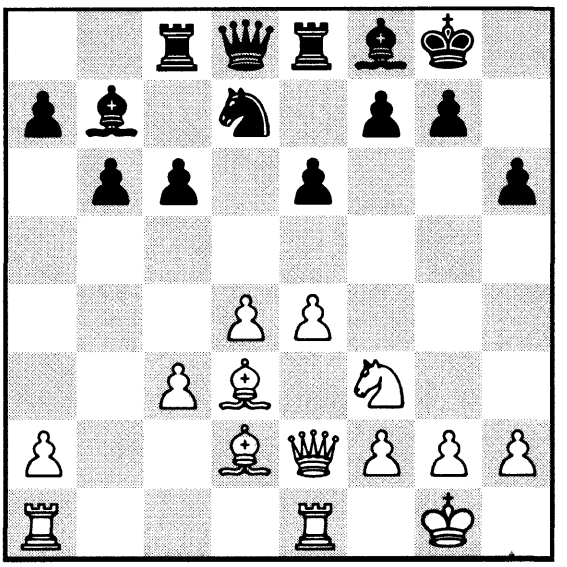
MYSTERIOUS ROOK MOVES

Another term coined by Nimzovich, a MYSTERIOUS ROOK MOVE refers to a move (by the Rook, of course!) that doesn't make sense at first glance; it makes no threat and serves no obvious defensive function. A closer look, however, shows the move to be either:

1) PROPHYLACTIC in nature (see Prophylaxis, page 265); it prevents the opponent from making use of some plan or idea that he would like to use.

2) A subtle preparation for some greater scheme.

(214)

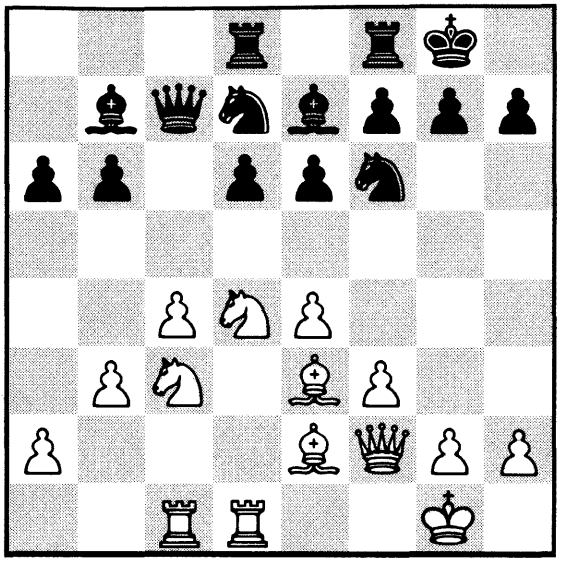


(White finds a MYSTERIOUS/PROPHYLACTIC ROOK MOVE)

White plays **1.Rad1**, a move that defends a pawn that is already well defended. Why bother doing this? The real reason relates to Black's plan: he wants to free himself with ...c7-c5. By

placing the Rook on d1, White makes this advance less palatable since it would open the d-file and suddenly activate the d1-Rook.

(215)



(Black moves and finds a MYSTERIOUS/
PREPARATORY ROOK MOVE)

Black has employed a hedgehog setup. As is common with this formation, Black strives to break White's bind with either ...b6-b5 or ...d6-d5. By playing the "mysterious" **1...Rfe8**, Black not only defends e7 and frees the f8-square for moves like ...Nf8 or ...Bf8, he also gives added strength to an eventual ...d6-d5 advance since captures on d5 would then open the e-file for Black's Rook.

OPEN FILES

Rooks belong on OPEN FILES. We have all heard this on many occasions but, for some reason, few players are able to get the most out of these pieces.

Rooks *are* extremely powerful pieces, no doubt about it. But, if that's true, why do they sit around doing nothing for so long? The answer lies with the movements of the other pieces. A Knight just leaps over its own pawns and boom, it's active! A Bishop doesn't even have to move; the d-pawn lunges forward and suddenly the lazy c1-Bishop is patrolling the c1-h6 diagonal.

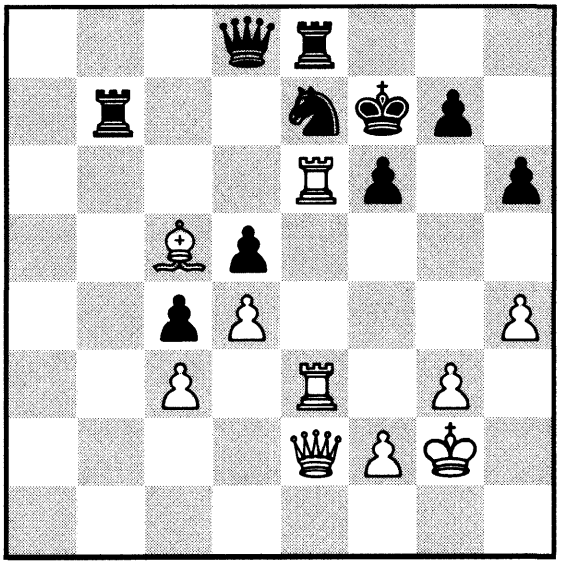
Rooks have a much harder time finding a way into the enemy position. However, when they do enter the fray their enormous strength becomes obvious. The following pointers will help you turn your Rooks into useful members of chessboard society.

Alekhine's Gun/Tripling

Nothing is as primal and awesome as the tripling of the Rooks and Queen on an open file. Such a powerful array of heavy pieces, ready to intrude into the enemy position, is hard to resist. One chess writer described it in the following way, "the opponent must have felt that an iron bar had been placed on the f-file."

Though it usually doesn't matter what piece is in front (every position will prove different), an array with two Rooks followed by a Queen bringing up the rear is known as ALEKHINE'S GUN. It was given this name when Alekhine used it to crush Nimzovich in a well known game.

(216)



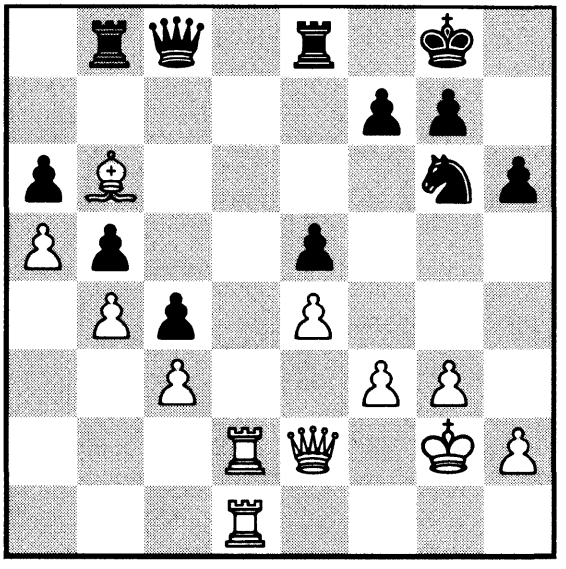
(ALEKHINE'S GUN)

White has taken complete control of the e-file. The pin against the e7-Knight immobilizes the e8-Rook and the horse, leaving Black in a passive and completely helpless situation.

Doubled Rooks

One of the best ways to claim a file is to double your Rooks on it. The power of DOUBLED ROOKS should not be underestimated, and the Rook's ability to jump into the heart of the enemy position can easily strike fear into the opposing army.

(217)



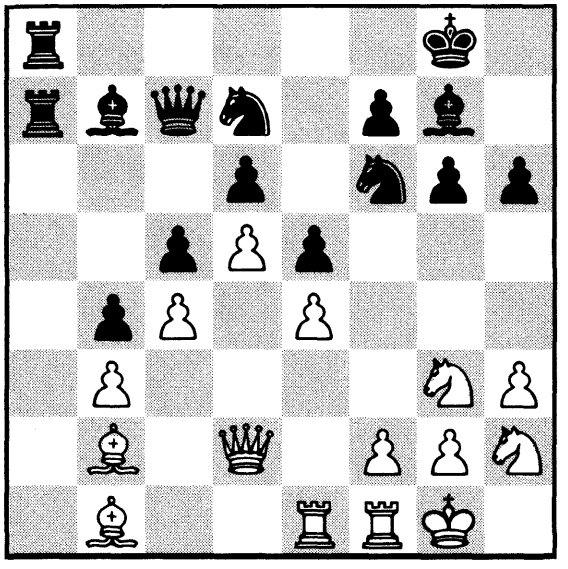
(Rulers of the d-file)

White's doubled Rooks have claimed the d-file for their own. Black has to worry about them jumping into d5, d6, d7 or d8.

No Entrance!

It is very important to understand that an open file is only worth bothering with if a Rook can use it to penetrate into the enemy position. If no penetration points exist, then the file is useless.

(218)



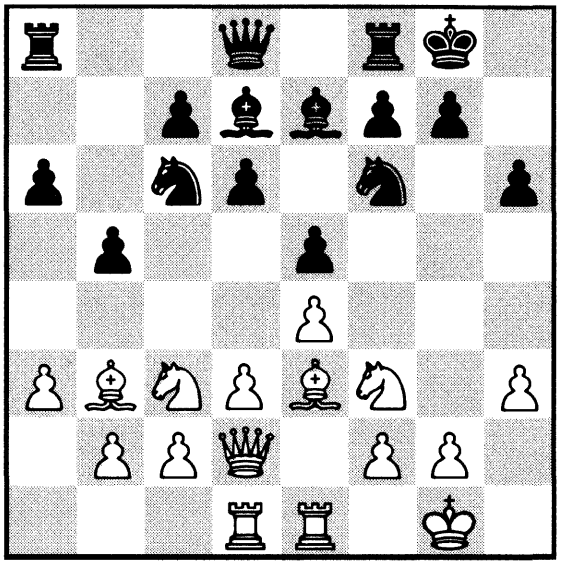
(No penetration points on the a-file)

Black is ruler of the a-file. Unfortunately, his Rooks can't venture beyond the a5-square; everything else is covered by White pieces.

Opening a File

Every Rook dreams of dominating an OPEN FILE, but most people don't seem to realize that such a file won't be handed to you on a platter. Generally, you have to open a file yourself or fight for control of a file that is already open.

(219)



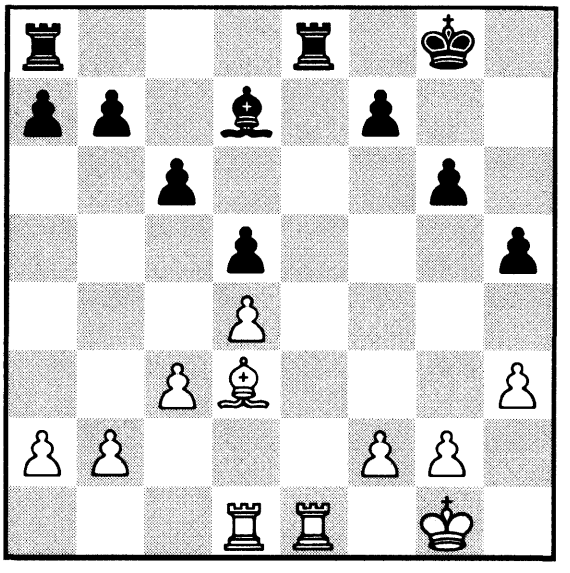
(White creates an OPEN FILE)

White's Rooks don't have any open files to make use of. By playing **1.d4** White threatens to open up the d-file with 2.dxe5. If Black replies with **1...exd4** then **2.Nxd4** gives both Rooks more scope than they previously had.

The Trading File

An OPEN FILE will often turn out to be equally contested by opposing Rooks. This will usually lead to massive trades. Unfortunately, such things can't be avoided because stepping away from the file would hand it over to the opponent.

(220)



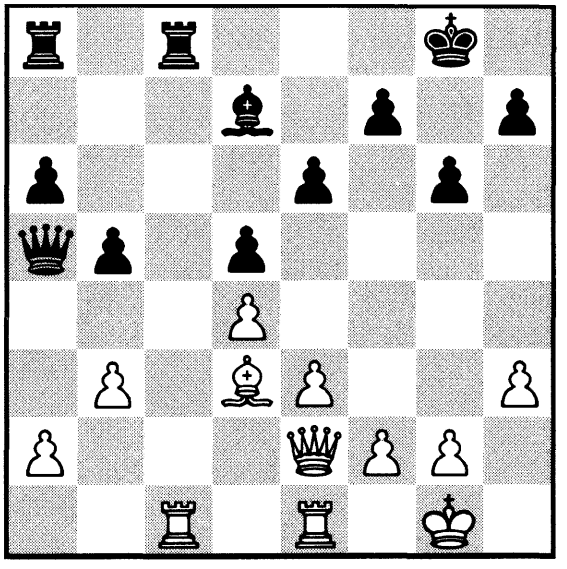
(A mutual road to nowhere)

The diagram shows us a TRADING FILE. After **1...Rxe1+ 2.Rxe1 Re8** all the Rooks disappear and the file becomes insignificant.

Who Owns the File?

Often an OPEN FILE is up for grabs, and both sides will fight hard to claim it for their own.

(221)



(Black takes the file by force)

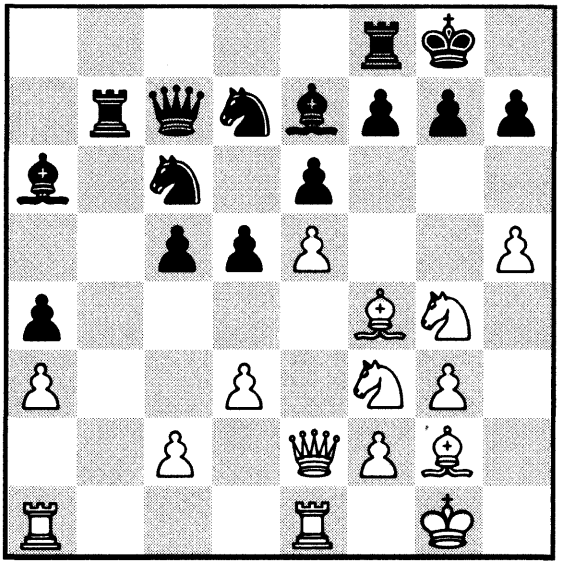
Black can grab the c-file with **1...Rc3 2.Qd2** Or 2.Rxc3 Qxc3 when Black takes immediate possession of the file. **2...Rac8** Intending 3...b4. **3.Rxc3 Qxc3 4.Qxc3 Rxc3** winning the file and claiming the advantage.

OVERPROTECTION

The great Aron Nimzovich (back in the 1920s) was the first to coin the term OVERPROTECTION. Since that time virtually every tournament player has heard of it but, strangely enough, very few of these players really know what it means.

Overprotection refers to a strategically important pawn or square that is given more protection than it seemingly needs. Essentially a prophylactic maneuver (see Prophylaxis, page 265), the side that overprotects does so in order to dissuade the opponent from launching an attack against that point.

(222)



(OVERPROTECTION of e5)

White has overprotected the e5-pawn in earnest. Why? You must understand that this pawn is very important; it virtually cuts the board in half and makes it difficult for Black's forces to come to the aid of their King. Once you accept the importance of this pawn, you can see that White doesn't want Black to be able to challenge it with ...f7-f6. By overprotecting e5 as much as he has

done, White dares Black to play ...f7-f6. The reply exf6 would suddenly unleash the full power of all the White pieces down the newly opened e-file and along the newly opened f4-b8 diagonal.

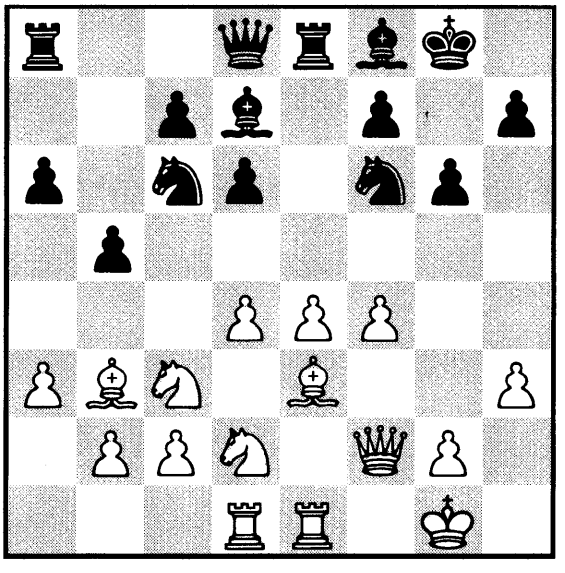
PAWN CENTER

In the 1800s and early 1900s most players felt that a large PAWN CENTER bestowed an instant advantage on its owner. This view dominated the chess scene until upstart hypermoderns like Réti, Alekhine and Nimzovich claimed that a pawn center could also be viewed as an object of attack.

Nowadays we know that owning an imposing pawn center is both a boon and a responsibility. The positive side of the pawn center is that it restricts the enemy pieces and gives its owner a spatial plus. However, like any artificially built edifice, it may easily turn into a liability which will be in need of constant defense.

The first responsibility of the owner of a big center is to make it indestructible. If this can be done, then the opponent will be without play and will smother to death in the folds of his own position.

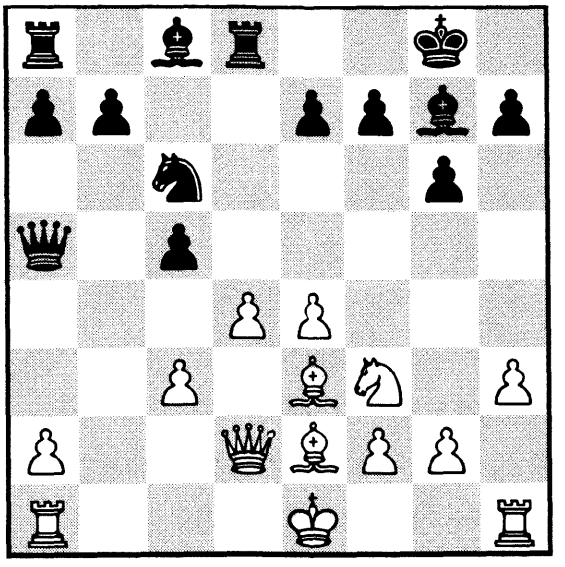
(223)



(White's huge center puts the squeeze on Black)

Conversely, the responsibility of the player facing the pawn center is to apply constant pressure against it and try to label it a weakness instead of a strength.

(224)



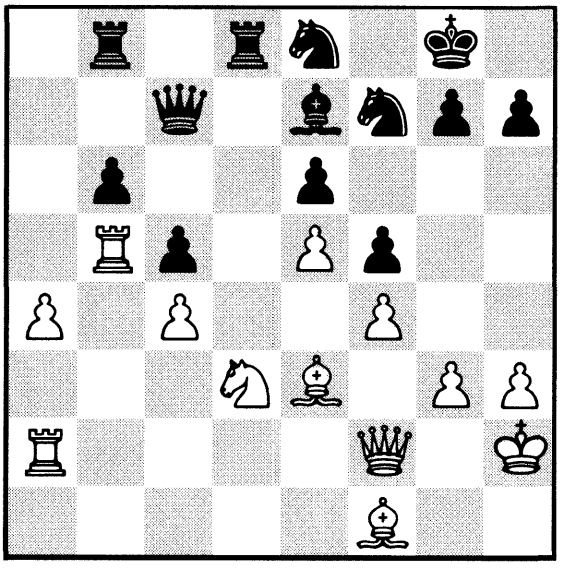
(White's PAWN CENTER is under a lot of pressure)

PAWN CHAIN

Chessplayers refer to two or more diagonally linked pawns as a pawn chain. This line of pawns has the advantage that all of its units are defended by other pawns, with the exception of the first one (known as the BASE). This fact leads us to a very important rule: ALWAYS ATTACK A PAWN CHAIN AT ITS BASE!

This rule makes quite a bit of sense. Hitting a defended pawn on the head seems counterproductive (why attack something at its strongest point?), but attacking the only undefended pawn in the line threatens to topple the whole row!

(225)



(White to play. Do you see the PAWN CHAINS?)

Three pawn chains stand out in this position: Black's pawns on b6 and c5, Black's pawn on e6 and f5, and White's pawns on g3, f4, and e5.

The base of White's pawn chain sits on g3, and Black isn't close to putting any pressure on it. The same can be said for the base of the e6 & f5 pawn chain: White has not managed to attack

e6 (the base). However, the b6 & c5 chain paints a different picture because White is actively pursuing an attack against its base on b6.

By adding to the pressure against b6, White hopes to eradicate that defending pawn and bring c5 to its knees! The best way to do this is **1.a5!** Knocking b6 off the board! **1...bxa5 2.R2xa5 Rxb5 3.Rxb5** and suddenly the c5-pawn (once so well-defended and smug) finds itself under a barrage from White's Queen, e3-Bishop, Rook and Knight!

Clearly, attacking a pawn chain at its base doesn't necessarily mean that you are trying to win the base pawn. Instead, you are hoping to knock the support away from the rest of the chain and turn them into attackable targets.

PAWN STRUCTURE

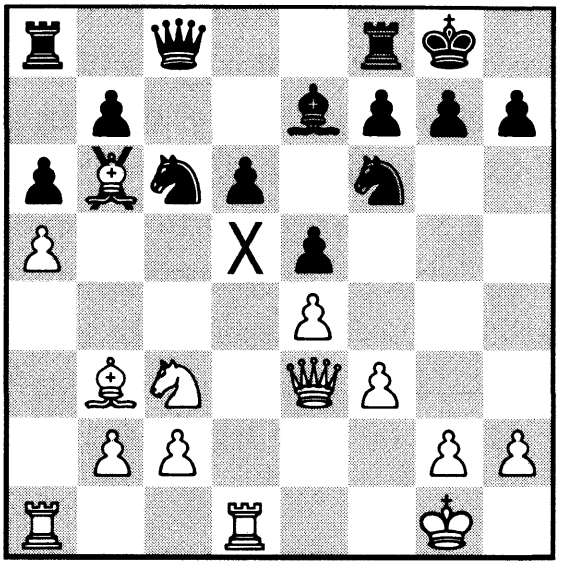
In the 1700s, Andre Philidor said, "Pawns are the soul of chess." This simple statement tells us that a particular pawn structure has the ability to let us know what plan(s) to adopt, when to seek an endgame, and when to realize that a position has some sort of static inferiority.

Strangely enough, this important information is often ignored or, at the very least, misunderstood by present-day amateurs. Do yourself a big favor and take a long look at the following basics of pawn structure. You will be very happy that you took the time to do so!

Backward Pawns

A BACKWARD PAWN is a pawn that has fallen behind its brother pawns and can't be guarded by them or safely move side by side with them.

(226)



(BACKWARD PAWNS on b7 and d6 leave White in charge of two weak squares)

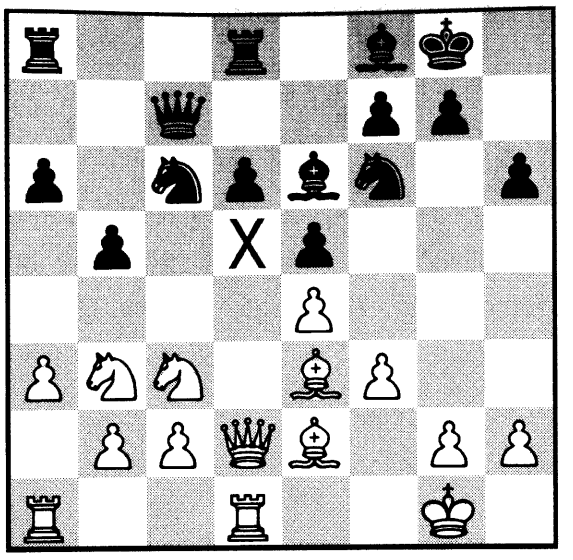
Black's b-pawn is backward but, because it doesn't stand on an open file, it's not a huge weakness in itself (the hole on b6 is another matter). The d-pawn is also backward, and the fact that it is standing on an open file makes it a potential target since White's Rooks can pile up on the poor thing.

A backward pawn's weakness or strength depends on the following questions:

1) Is it sitting on an open file? If it isn't, then the pawn probably won't become a significant weakness. The b-pawn in diagram 226 isn't sitting on an open file and, as a result, is not in any real danger.

2) How well is it defended? A well-defended backward pawn (even one sitting on an open file) can often shrug off many kinds of attacks.

(227)



(Both d6 and d5 are well-defended)

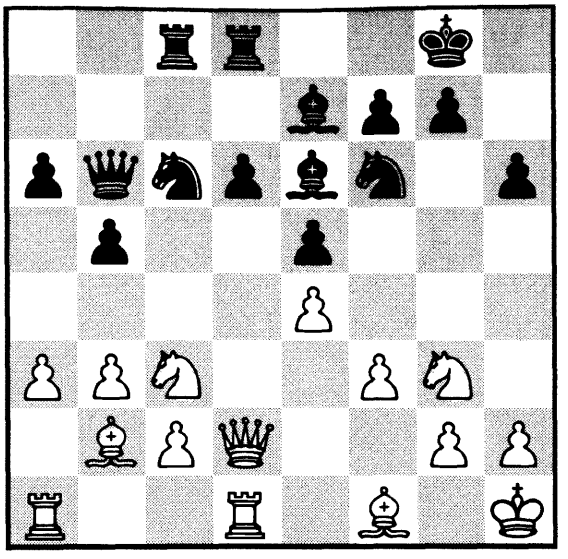
The backward pawn in diagram 227 is well-defended and is not in any danger. Also notice that the weakness of the square in front of it isn't a real problem (1...d5 is threatened and 1.Nd5 Bxd5 forces White to occupy d5 with a pawn). In the previous diagram the b-pawn wasn't weak, but the b6-square was already acting as a home for the White army (the d5-square was also very weak).

3) Is the square directly in front of the backward pawn adequately protected by pieces? Black didn't cover the squares in front of his backward pawns (in diagram 226) in a satisfactory manner, while the "weak" square in diagram 227 isn't weak at all.

4) Is the backward pawn serving a useful purpose defending the pawns that have gone ahead of it? The backward d-pawn in diagram 228 is making the e5-pawn as solid as a rock. This, in turn, blocks the White Bishop on b2 and gives Black control over the d4-square.

5) Can it successfully advance, thereby riddling itself of the backward label?

(228)



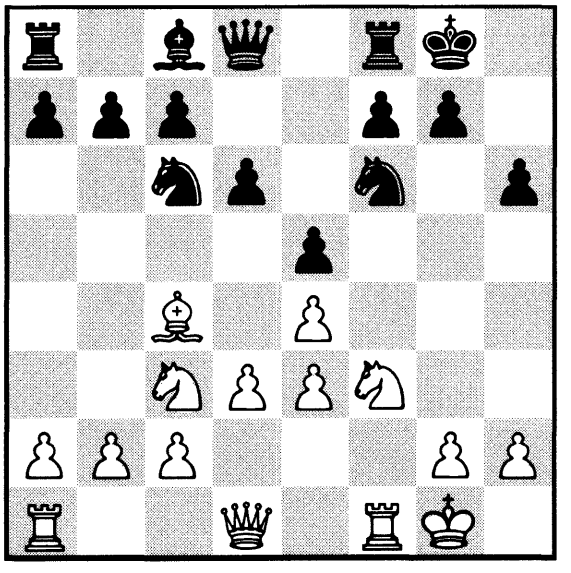
(The d-pawn is BACKWARD in appearance only)

In diagram 228, the backward d-pawn is able to safely advance to d5 (1...d5).

Doubled Pawns

Though despised by most players, the DOUBLED PAWN is not all bad, and often it can be an actual advantage. First, a doubled pawn gives its owner an extra open file for his Rooks; second, if the pawns are central, they allow for coverage of critical squares that would not be possible if the pawns were undoubled and "healthy."

(229)

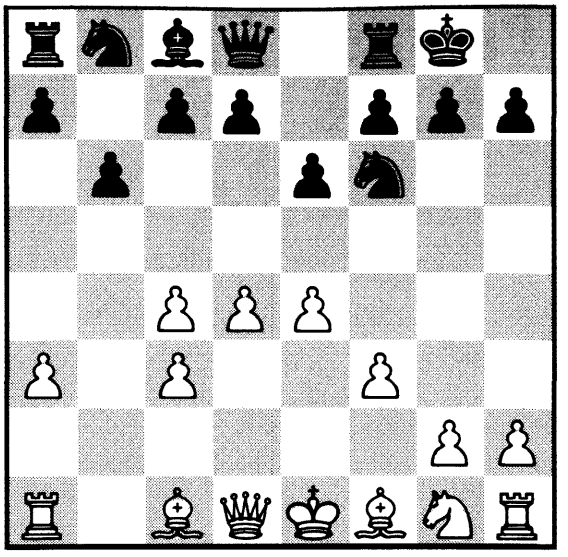


(A useful DOUBLED PAWN)

White's doubled e-pawns give him control over d5, f5, d4 and f4. The open f-file is another perk that this structure offers.

Naturally, doubled pawns can also turn out to be inflexible and, in the worst case scenario, simply weak. In general, the lead doubled pawn turns out to be the target.

(230)



(White's c4-pawn is vulnerable to attack)

White's c4-pawn will be attacked by ...Ba6 and ...Nb8-c6-a5.

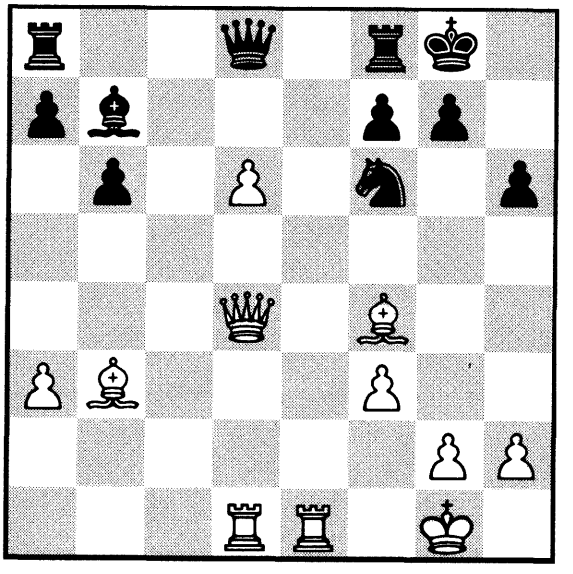
Isolated Pawn

An ISOLATED PAWN is created when no other "friendly" pawn is on an adjacent file. This lonely guy can't be touched or defended by any of its brothers and, as a result, it becomes vulnerable to attack by enemy pieces.

Most players feel that an isolated pawn is always a weakness. However, nothing can be further from the truth! An isolated pawn might be an unstoppable passer (see diagram 231). It might be centrally placed (which means that it may guard important central squares. See diagram 232). You might be able to use it as a battering ram that will slam into (and subsequently fragment) the enemy's "superior" structure (see diagram 233).

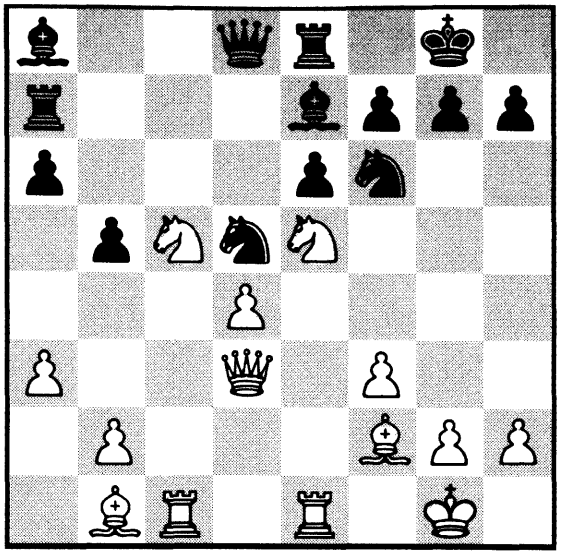
Even if your isolated pawn isn't going anywhere, your Rooks might become more active than the opponent's thanks to the two half open files on either side of it (see diagram 232).

(231)



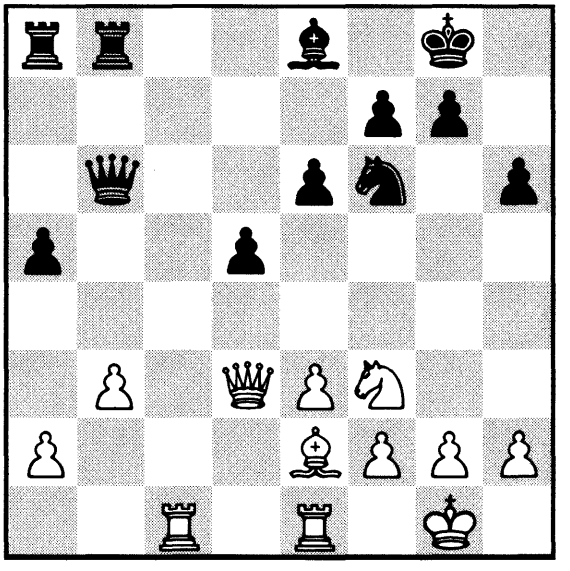
(The ISOLATED PAWN is a valuable passer)

(232)



(The ISOLATED d-pawn gives White control over the c5 and e5-squares)

(233)



(The ISOLATED a-pawn hits b3 and shatters White's structure)

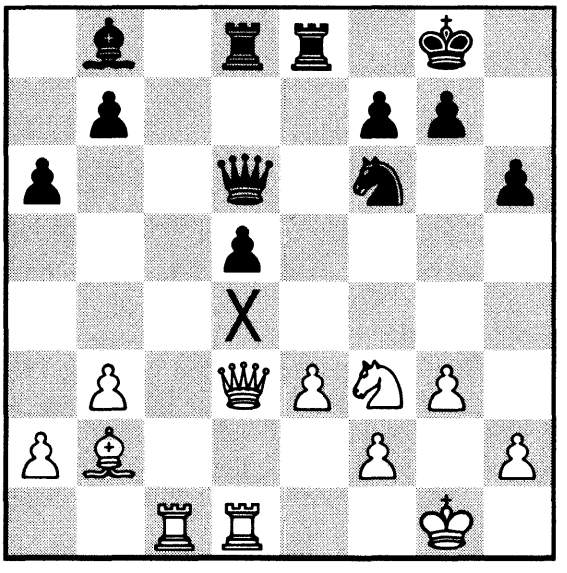
In diagram 233 Black plays **1...a4**, gets rid of his isolated battering ram and, after making a pawn trade (via ...axb3), turns White's "healthy" majority into a weak isolated pawn.

Of course, an isolated pawn does have a downside, and if your opponent ends up with one of the critters you should do the following:

1) Make sure it can't move by taking control of the square directly in front of it. A moving target is hard to hit; a target that is stuck in one place is easy to aim at.

2) The square directly in front of the isolated pawn can't be guarded by one of its brother pawns. Due to this, that square is a perfect home (support point) for an enemy piece. (Also see Blockade, page 178.)

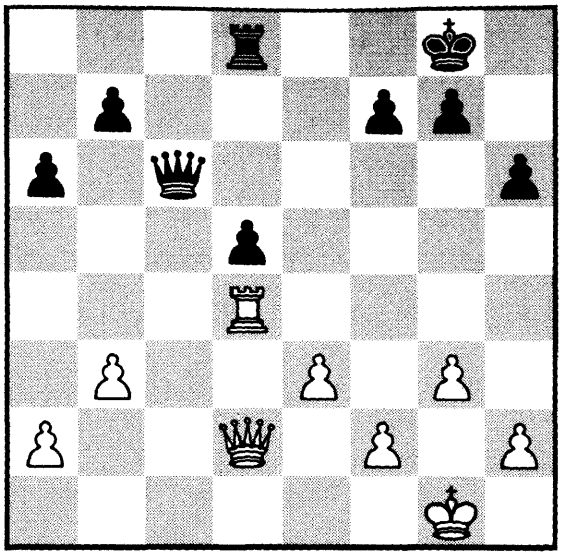
(234)



(White's control over d4 stops the ISOLATED d-pawn and gives White's Knight a very nice home)

3) An advanced isolated pawn (i.e., a White pawn on d4 or a Black pawn on d5) gains space and makes its pieces rather active. The side playing against the iso should exchange all the minor pieces (they can't get active if they are not on the board!), place a Rook in front of the pawn (this immobilizes the poor thing), and put the Queen behind it (doubling on the pawn and putting a lot of pressure on it).

(235)



(White wins the ISOLATED PAWN by following a clear formula)

White has followed all three steps: he has taken control of the square in front of the pawn; he has exchanged off all the minor pieces; and he has doubled on it and forced the remaining Black units to take up a defensive stance.

White now wins this pawn by **1.e4** when the pin along the d-file doesn't give Black a way to escape his fate.

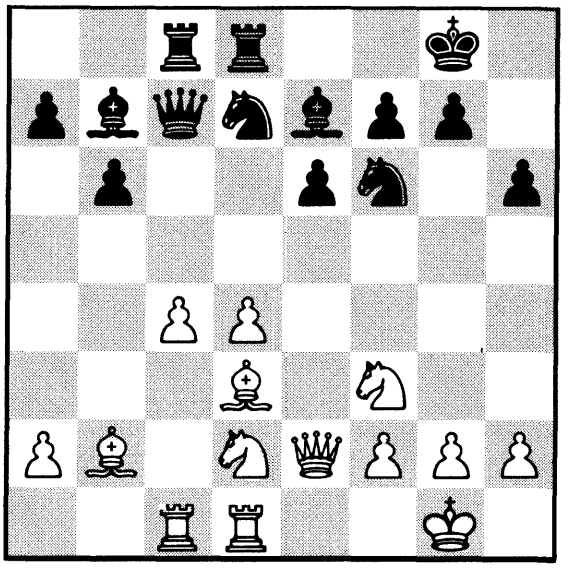
Isolated Pawn Couple

The ISOLATED PAWN COUPLE involves two touching pawns that are isolated from the rest of the pawn structure. Most commonly, this involves pawns (from White's point of view) on c3 and d4 or pawns on c4 and d4. Let's take a look at both these situations:

Hanging pawns

Two pawns on the fourth rank (almost invariably a c-pawn and d pawn) sitting next to each other (with no "friendly" pawns to the right or left) are known as HANGING PAWNS. Though the name denotes weakness, this structure actually boasts a lot of dynamic potential.

(236)



(White's c-pawn and d-pawn form HANGING PAWNS)

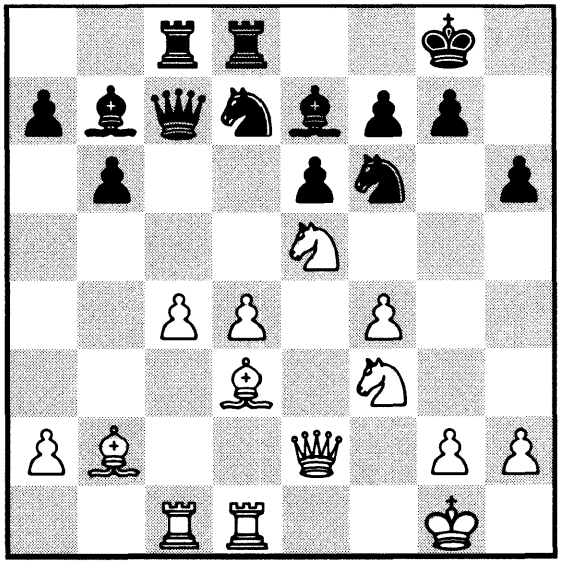
The strategic problems involved with this situation are complex and rich. Let's look at the proper ideas for both sides (we will say that White has the pawns, Black will be playing against them):

Strategy (White)

White's hanging pawns give him more space and take the squares on b5, c5, d5 and e5 away from the enemy pieces. In general, White will give his pawns a lot of support and then try one of three things:

1) Use the e5-square as a home for a Knight. A follow-up of f2-f4 can easily give him a huge spatial plus and excellent chances for a kingside attack.

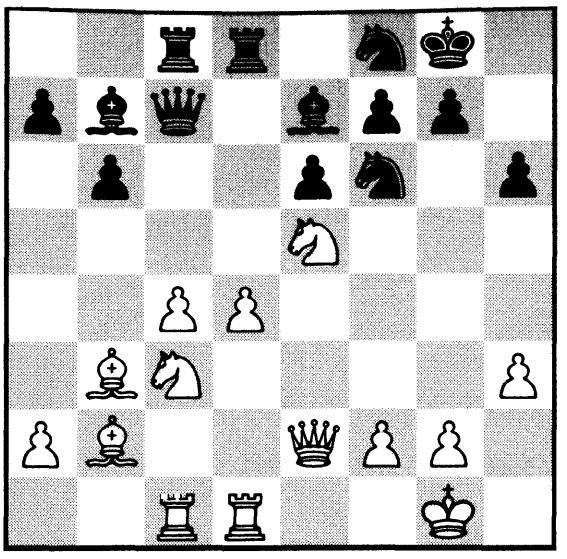
(237)



(White has a very strong attacking position)

2) Create a passed pawn by c4-c5 or d4-d5. Both these advances also tend to activate White's pieces (though they do weaken some squares; a d4-d5 advance weakens the c5-square. A c4-c5 advance weakens d5).

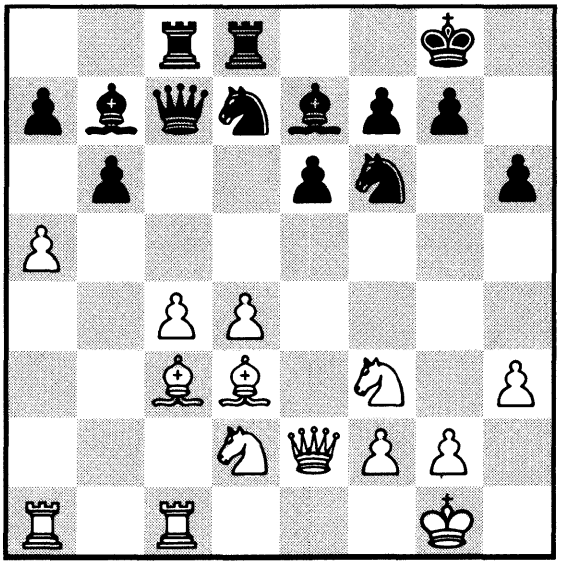
(238)



(White activates his pieces and creates a passer by 1.d5)

3) Play to create a pawn weakness in the enemy camp by a2-a4-a5.

(239)



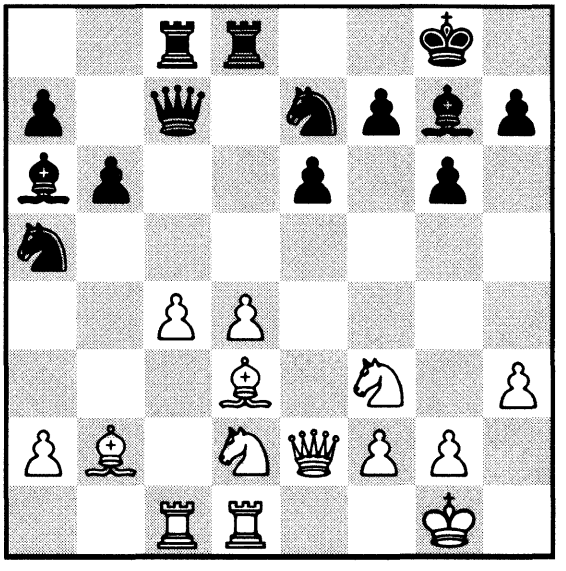
(The pawn on a5 forces a weakening in Black's structure)

Strategy (Black)

Black needs to find a way to place pressure on White's pawns. If he can't label them as weaknesses, he may find himself without active play due to his lack of breathing room. Black's two active ideas are:

1) Bring his pieces to bear on one of the White pawns. This will either win the poor thing or, at the very least, force White to turn his attention to defensive schemes.

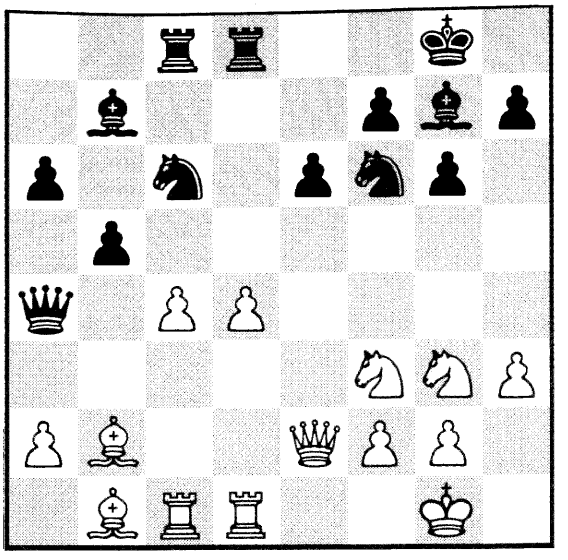
(240)



(Both c4 and d4 are being eyed by Black's pieces)

2) Play to create some holes by a ...b6-b5 or ...e6-e5 advance. White can then trade pawns (which will lead to a weak isolated pawn) or he can push and create a passer. The flaw with White's latter choice is that the passer can be blockaded and the backward pawn attacked.

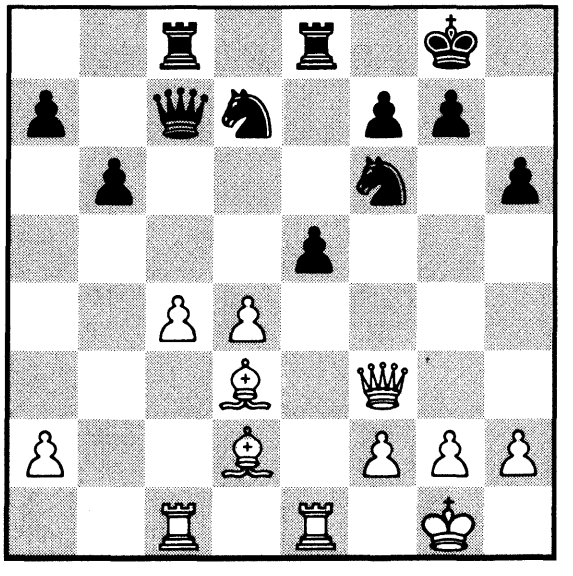
(241)



(Black's ...b6-b5 advance forces White to make a decision)

In diagram 241 White must choose between 1.cxb5 axb5, which leaves White with an isolated d-pawn, or 1.c5 which leaves the d5 square in Black's hands. The d4-pawn (now a backward pawn) would also be a sitting duck.

(242)



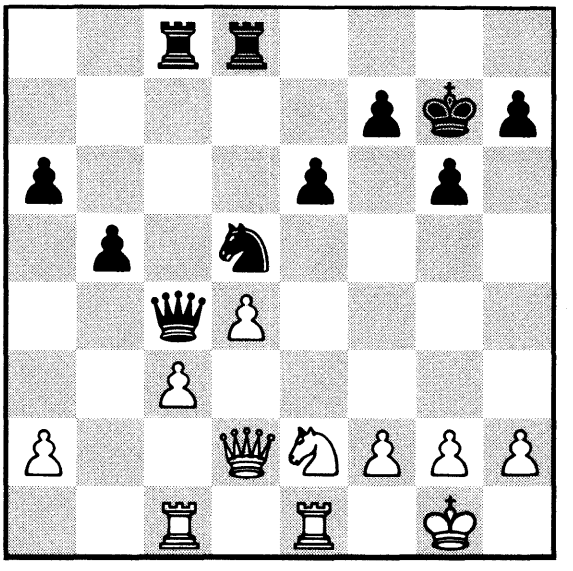
(Black's ...e6-e5 advance is bothersome to White)

In diagram 242 White must choose between 1.dxe5 Nxe5, which doesn't look very attractive for White at all, or 1.d5, which hands the c5 square over to Black (a Black Knight will gleefully jump to c5). Note that the c4-pawn would also be backward and weak.

Hanging squares

While the HANGING PAWNS can be a real boon (due to control of the b5, c5, d5 and e5 squares), the common formation with White pawns on c3 and d4 is far less inviting. If Black can place pieces on the c4 and d5 squares (effectively blockading the pawns), White's game will often become strategically lost.

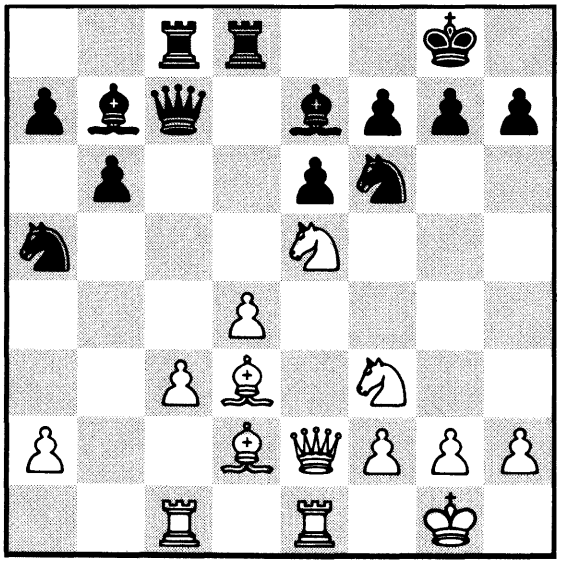
(243)



(White's position is horrible)

To avoid this fate, White must either advance his pawn to c4 (creating the good version of hanging pawns) or make use of the extra space that the d4-pawn gives by setting up a strong attacking position. The latter strategy is very similar to that of the isolated d4-pawn.

(244)



(White's pieces all aim at the Black King)

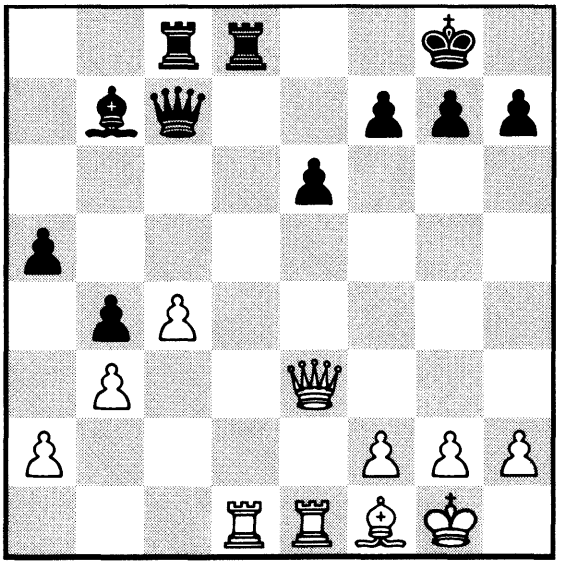
Passed Pawns

Most players take it for granted that PASSED PAWNS are advantageous to own. Though often true (especially in the endgame), passed pawns can also be a disadvantage!

To decide when a passed pawn is useless or useful, you must ask two questions:

1) If both sides have play elsewhere that has nothing to do with the passer, a passed pawn, even one that isn't doing anything, can prove useful as an endgame insurance policy.

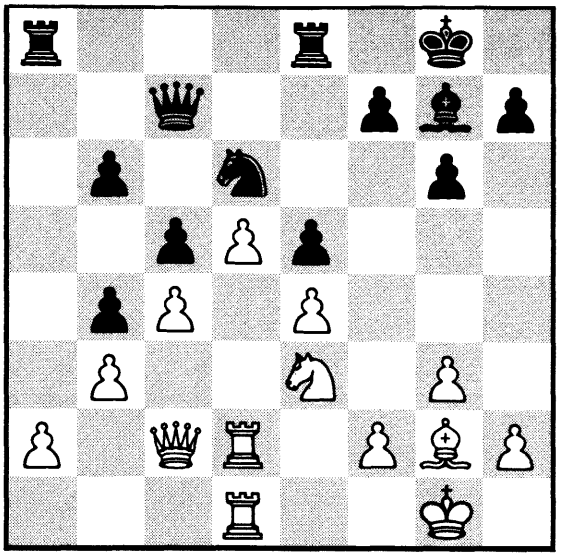
(245)



(White's PASSED PAWN makes any endgame very unpalatable for Black)

2) Can the passed pawn be firmly blockaded? If it can, then the pawn may end up acting as a traitor; its very existence may block files and diagonals (and thus its own Bishops and Rooks) and give the opponent access to a key square (the one in front of the passer) that wouldn't be available if the pawn were not there.

(246)

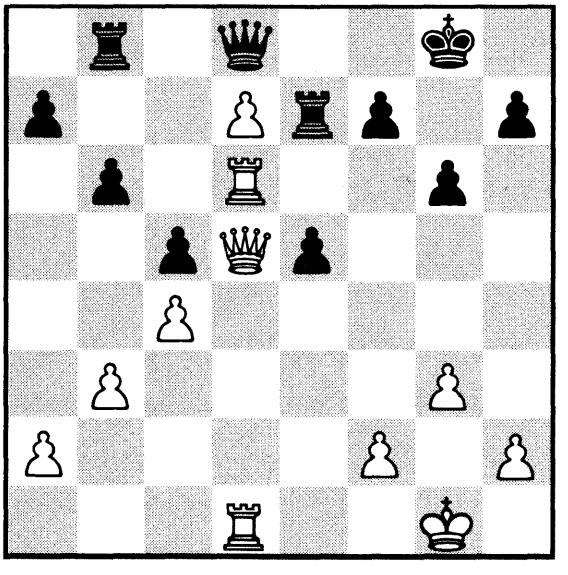


(A bad PASSED PAWN)

In the diagram 246 the blockading Black Knight is ideally placed. It would not be able to remain on its comfortable home if the d5-pawn didn't exist. Also note how White's passed pawn blocks the d-file (killing the White Rooks) and takes the d5-square away from the White Knight. (See Blockade, page 178.)

If a passed pawn can't be blockaded, the pawn can run down the board and cause panic in the enemy's ranks. The defender will be in for a hard ride if the pawn gets safely past the fifth rank.

(247)

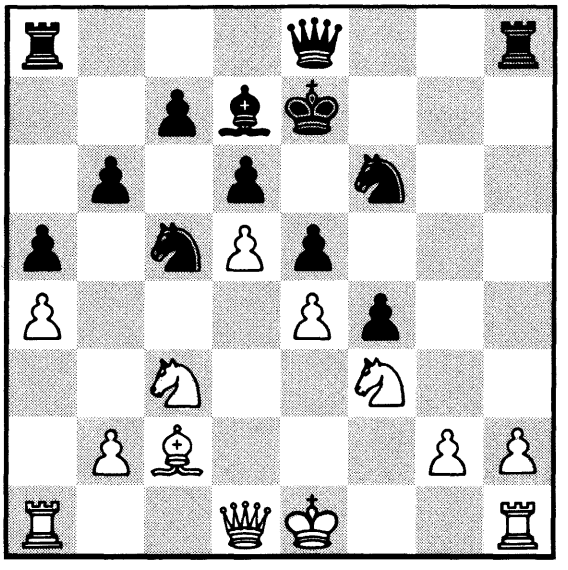


(The PASSED PAWN is torturing Black)

Pawn Islands

A group of pawns, separated from other pawn groups, is known as a PAWN ISLAND.

(248)



(White has three PAWN ISLANDS, Black only has one)

White's three pawn islands are:

1) The pawns on a4 and b2.

2) The pawns on d5 and e4.

3) The pawns on h2 and g2.

The side with fewer pawn islands is generally thought to have the superior pawn structure because each island may become individually vulnerable to attack.

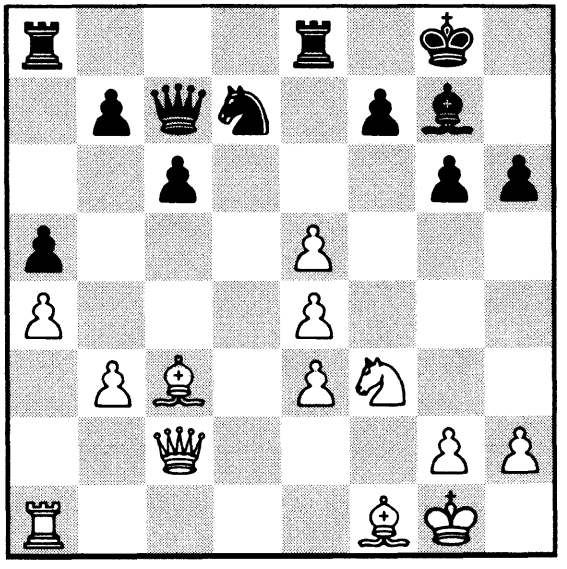
Going back to diagram 248 we see that White's h-pawn and g-pawn are both potentially vulnerable, while e4 is also in need of defense. White's queenside pawns might also come under fire at some later stage of the game, but at the moment they are fixed by the enemy pawn on a5.

Black's connected pawns are much tighter; his only attackable unit being on c7. Moves like ...Qg6 followed by ...Rag8 (attacking points in two different islands) will put him firmly in command.

Tripled Pawns

TRIPLED PAWNS have no redeeming value in themselves, and, i you don't have some form of compensation for them (an attack, a material advantage, extremely active pieces, etc.), your game wil almost certainly take a downward turn.

(249)

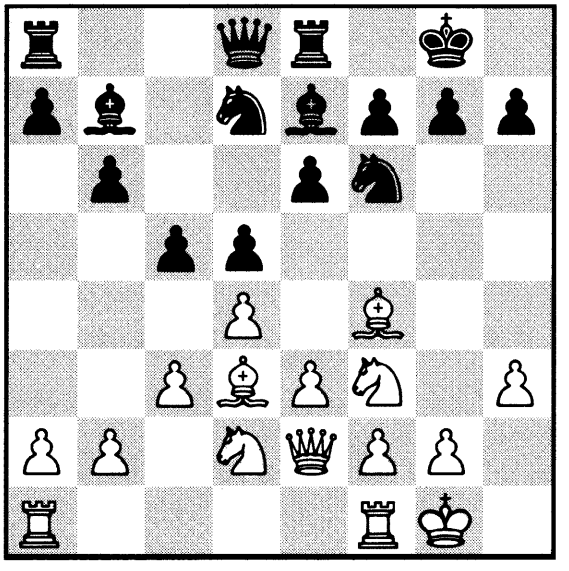


(Weak targets, three in a row)

PAWN TENSION

When pawns face off in situations where they can capture each other, it often pays to let the tension between them linger unless you make some sort of clear gain by giving in and taking.

(250)



(Nobody wants to take!)

This position shows us a case of PAWN TENSION between the pawns on d4 and c5. White (if it were his turn to move) wouldn't want to play **1.dxc5** since that would allow **1...bxc5** (1...Nxc5 is also good) when Black has gained access to the half open b-file and has also been handed a preponderance of pawns in the center. It's far better for White to leave this possibility open since he can take on c5 whenever he wishes to; why rush it and give up all his options (while simultaneously giving Black all the goodies we spoke of earlier)?

Also note that **1.dxc5** isn't really trading the d-pawn for Black's c-pawn—that's an illusion. The actual exchange is (dynamic) d4-pawn for (passive) b6-pawn since **1.dxc5 bxc5** pulls that pawn to c5.

If it were Black to move, he would most likely avoid 1...cxd4 since that would open up the e-file for White (after 2.exd4) and exchange the space-gaining central c-pawn for the passive guy on e3.

To put things in easy perspective: only trade pawns if you gain something by doing so!

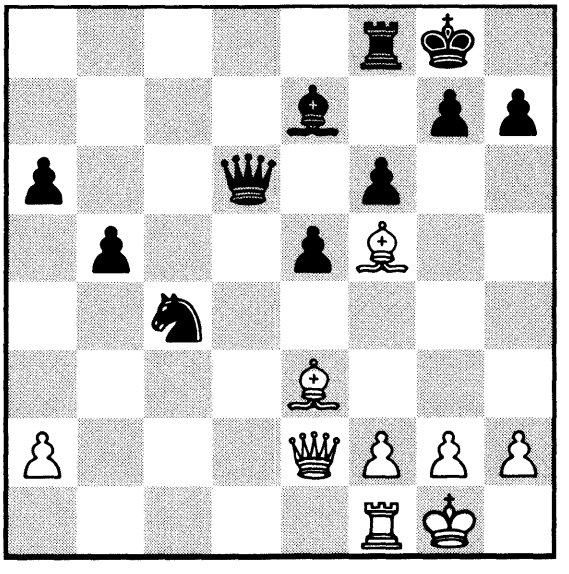
PERPETUAL CHECK

At times you start an attack that doesn't quite get the job done (*i.e*, you can't mate the enemy King). Material has been sacrificed, your initiative is grinding to a halt, the end seems to be nearing with each move.

At other times you may simply find that you've been outplayed and are getting positionally, strategically or tactically mashed.

As grim as these situations are, the possibility of gaining a draw by PERPETUAL CHECK (the enemy King is unable to get away from a deluge of constant, nonfatal checks, thus a draw is agreed) gives you something to play for, and sacrifices can happily be made to achieve this goal.

(251)



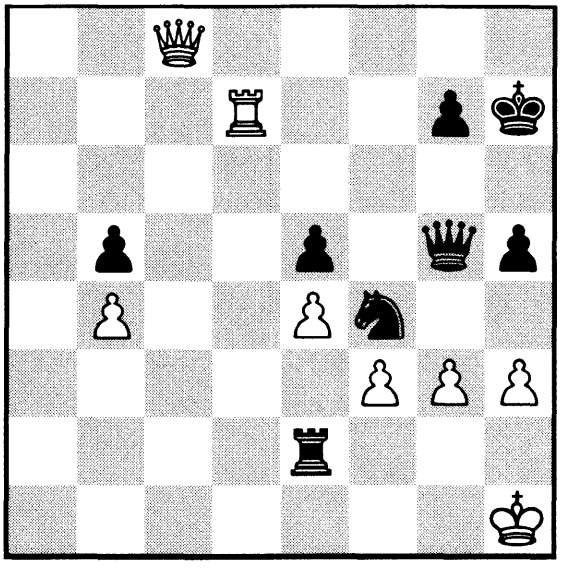
(White to move and draw)

White is two pawns down and, under normal circumstances, would most likely suffer a defeat. However, a last minute attack allows him to save the game by delivering a perpetual check against the Black King. **1.Qh5 g6** The only other way to defend

h7 was 1...h6, but then 2.Bxh6! would prove annoying. **2.Bxg6! hxg6 3.Qxg6+ Kh8 4.Qh6+** White accepts the perpetual. Trying to win with 4.Bh6 Rg8 5.Qh5 would leave Black with two pieces for a Rook after 5...Rg7! 6.Bxg7+ Kxg7. **4...Kg8 5.Qg6+**, draw agreed.

Sometimes perpetual check is combined with other themes such as STALEMATE.

(252)



(Black throws his victory away)

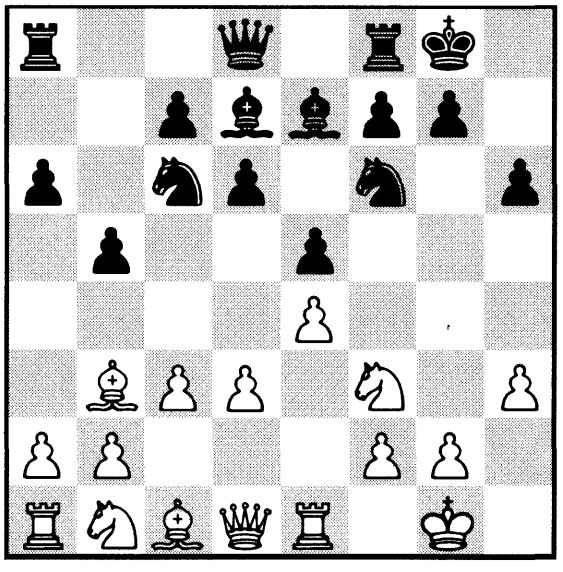
Even Grandmasters fall asleep. Black, a piece ahead, can win in many ways. At this point Reshevsky (from Evans-Reshevsky, U.S. Championship 1964) stopped concentrating and played **1...Qxg3??**. He didn't notice that this move stalemates the White King. **2.Qg8+!** White intends to give away his only two mobile pieces. Has he gone mad? **2...Kxg8 3.Rxg7+!** Suddenly everything is clear. The game is drawn because 3...Kxg7 or 3...Qxg7 lead to an immediate stalemate, while 3...Kf8 4.Rf7+ Ke8 5.Re7+ is a perpetual check.

PIECE ACTIVITY

Good players are always looking for ways to make their pieces as active as possible. Knights need to find advanced support points, Bishops need open diagonals, and open files must be created for your Rooks.

Activating your pieces may seem obvious, but I constantly see amateurs make use of a couple of pieces and ignore the rest, leaving them to suffer inactive, unproductive lives. Never forget that your pieces should be working as a team! Nurture each and every one of them, make sure that they complement each other (i.e., they work toward the same goal); a well coordinated, active army will repay your efforts with many beautiful victories.

(253)



(Find an active post for your b1-Knight)

In this position White still has to deal with the development of his queenside pieces. Black's pieces have not landed on impressive squares, but White's forces aren't exactly burning down the town either!

Some players might begin an instant central expansion by 1.d4 while others might try for a kingside attack with 1.g4. Both moves make the mistake of initiating an aggressive stance before your forces are fully mobilized.

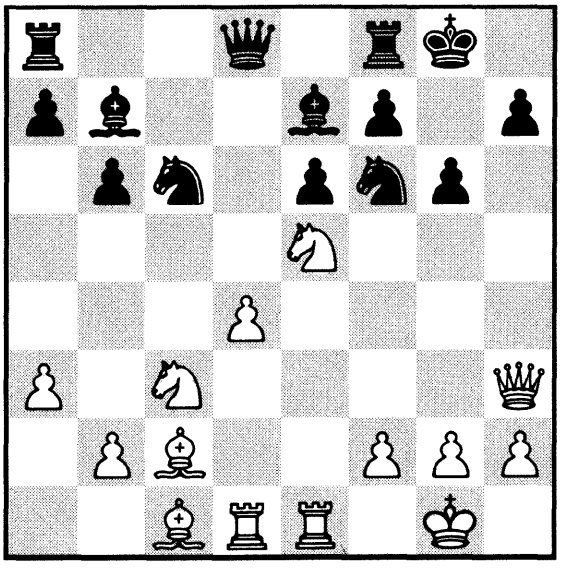
The correct move is **1.Nbd2**. It is important to understand that d2 is not the Knight's final home; just tossing it somewhere and forgetting about the poor beast is a common but badly misguided outlook on the game. Don't find any old square for your piece—find the very BEST square!

White is willing to use a few moves to relocate his horse to a fine new home on g3. After **1.Nbd2**, White will continue with **2.Nf1** and then **3.Ng3** when the horse is no longer blocking its fellow men. On g3 it also does a host of other duties: 1) takes the h5-square away from the enemy Knight; 2) prepares for an eventual leap into f5; 3) defends e4 in anticipation of the space-gaining d3-d4.

PLAN

A PLAN is a short or long-range goal on which a player bases his moves. Some plans can cover the space of just a couple of moves, while others can span the whole game.

(254)



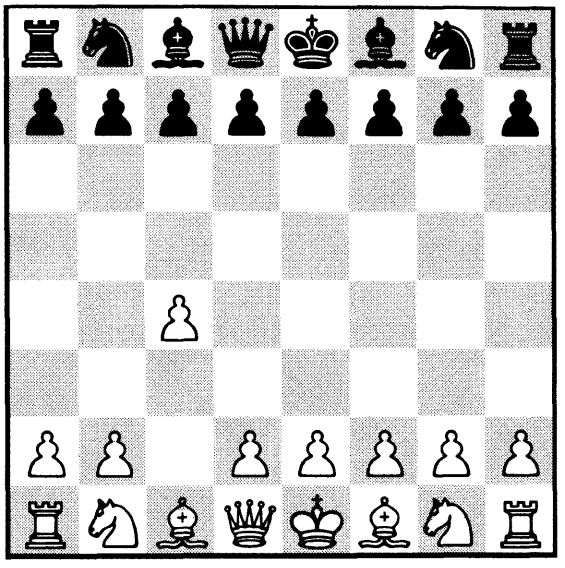
(Long-range PLAN)

In this typical isolated d-pawn position, White plans to build up pressure against his opponent's King (based on his e5 outpost and the fact that all his pieces are aimed in that direction). Black's plan centers around proving that the isolated d-pawn is weak. To that end, he will strive to exchange minor pieces (which will kill off White's kingside attack) and he will make sure that he keeps a firm grip on the d5-square (this stops the White d-pawn from rushing forward).

It may take Black forty moves to actualize this plan, and many different maneuvers may take place while he is trying to make it a reality. Nonetheless, everything he does in this game will be based on the long-range plans of both players.

Surprisingly, such expansive plans (whose outlines are clear but the method for accomplishing them are vague) are rather common at the top levels of chess, and most of them begin right in the opening phase.

(255)



(A clear PLAN after one move!)

Only one move has been played in diagram 255 (1.c4) but White already knows what he wants to achieve during his next few turns: control over the d5-square. To this end, White will play **2.Nc3** (develops and hits d5), **3.g3** and finally **4.Bg2** (develops and hits d5). Other plans will arise when White sees what system of development Black has chosen.

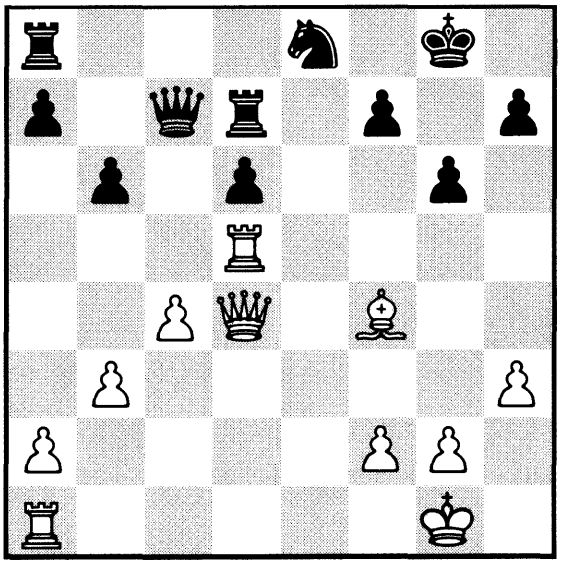
PRINCIPLE OF TWO WEAKNESSES

One of the main goals of a chessplayer is to create an attackable weakness in the enemy camp and then to bring all his pieces to bear on it. Unfortunately, the opponent will usually be able to hang on since his defensive chore centers around only one point on the board.

The PRINCIPLE OF TWO WEAKNESSES (a concept that can be used in the both the middlegame and the endgame) states that the creation of a second weakness (or advantage) stretches the enemy's ability to resist to unmanageable proportions.

The logic behind this is that the attacker usually has more space and more room to move his pieces about (in other words, he has better balance). It stands to reason that the better balanced side will have no trouble jumping from one area of contention to another, while the defender (who lacks proper mobility) will not be able to nurture those two afflicted areas with the same speed and agility.

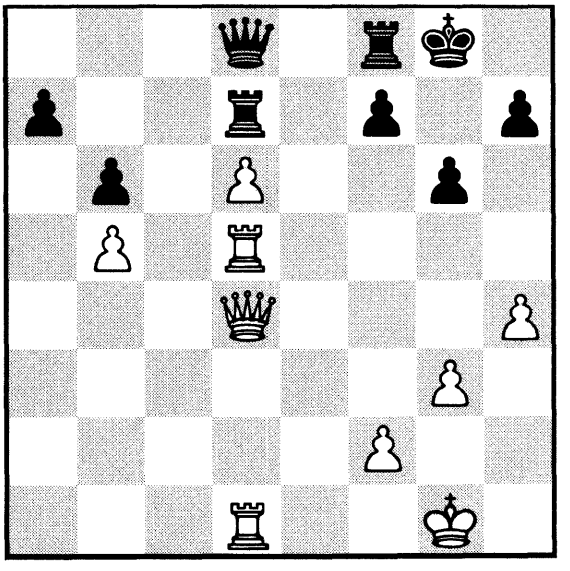
(256)



(Black has too many weaknesses)

In diagram 256 White is already torturing Black's pawn on d6 (weakness number one). To make matters even worse for the second player, White also has control over the dark-squares on the kingside (weakness number two). These two target areas should be enough to win the game, but if White needs to create a third weakness then a2-a4-a5 turns Black's queenside pawns into cannon fodder (weakness number three).

(257)



(Stretching the defense)

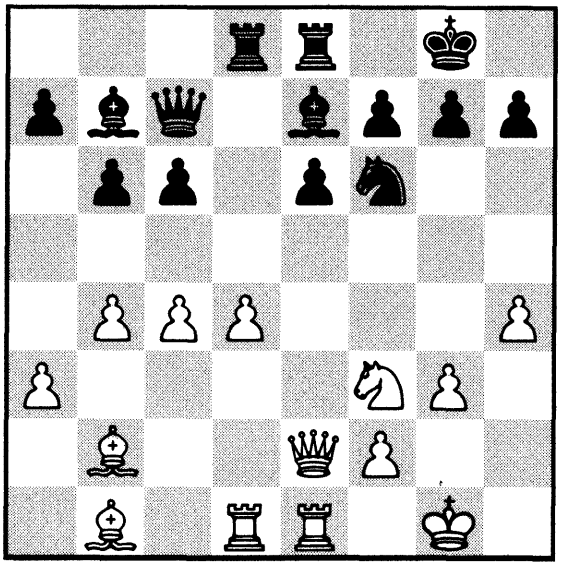
In diagram 257 White's powerful passed d-pawn has Black on the run. Though White is clearly in charge, a win still hasn't been notched on his belt. In order to stretch his opponent's defenses, White plays **1.h5!** (creating a second weakness or advantage) when the second player suddenly has to concern himself with King safety. The threat of h5-h6 (and a threatened mate on g7) places Black's game in a state of chaos.

PROPHYLAXIS

A term coined by Nimzovich, it refers to a move or strategy that stops the opponent from undertaking some type of action or plan (prophylactic means preventive, thus you are preventing the opponent from doing something).

PROPHYLACTIC play can be very subtle or brutally straightforward. The position in the following diagram gives us a taste of both: the answer is quite straightforward but also a bit surprising and, therefore, contains some subtlety.

(258)



(Time for PROPHYLAXIS!)

White has a substantial advantage in space and piece activity. Usually Black tries to free himself in these positions via ...e6-e5 or ...c6-c5. White has already clamped down on the e5-square (prophylaxis!) and made this advance impossible. However, Black is about to play ...c6-c5, a move that gains space, hits at White's center and activates the b7-Bishop (the pressure down the loose b7-h1 diagonal could well prove annoying to the first player).

What should White do about this? Prophylaxis to the rescue! By playing **1.c5!** White clamps down on Black's expansion and grabs even more space. True, Black suddenly has access to the d5-square, but one square for one piece can't make up for the asphyxiation of an entire army. By following up with Ne5, White can build a kingside attack at his leisure, while Black can only stare helplessly and wait for his doom to arrive.

QUEENSIDE PAWN MAJORITY

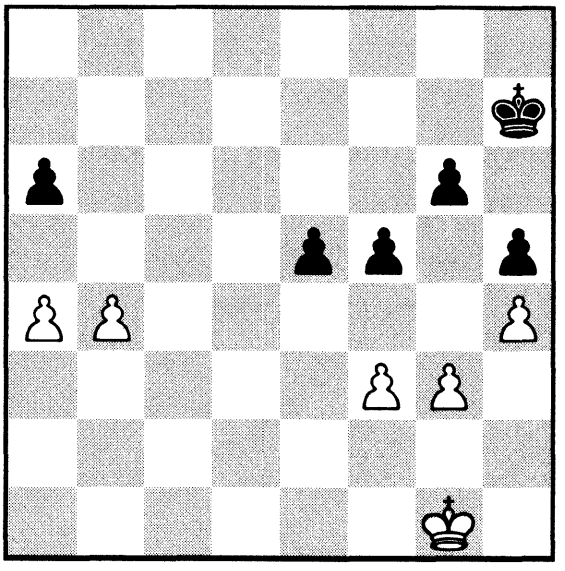
Owning a PAWN MAJORITY means you have more pawns in a specific area of the board than your opponent does. This sounds great, but the downside is that your opponent has his own majority—lurking, waiting, lusting to advance.

So, is one majority better than another? Some point to the pawns living on the queenside. Indeed, a lot of noise has been made about the mighty queenside pawn majority. Is a queenside majority really better than a central or kingside majority? If so, what's the logic behind its greater power? These epic questions will be answered in the next two sections.

Queenside Majority Versus Kingside Majority

The QUEENSIDE PAWN MAJORITY is usually superior to a kingside majority simply because the Kings, more often than not, are both castled on the kingside. This means that when an endgame arrives, the passed pawn created by the queenside majority (known as an *outside passed pawn*) will be further away from the Kings and, as a result, will be more of a threat to promote.

(259)



(The QUEENSIDE MAJORITY rules)

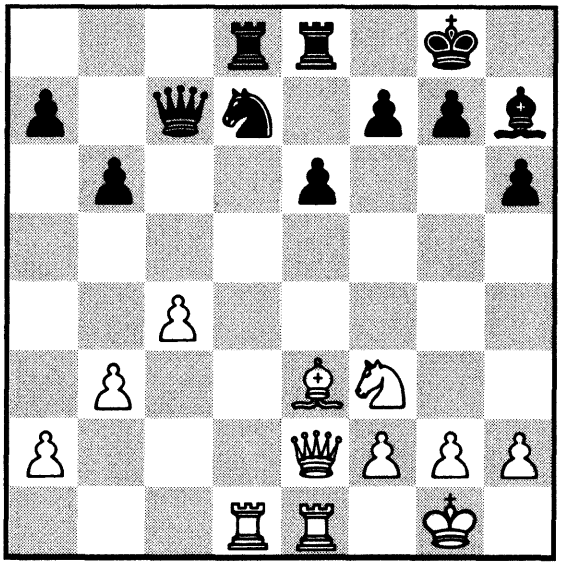
White's queenside majority will produce a passed pawn that is impossible for Black to stop (1.b5!). The passed pawn that Black can create (...e4) won't go anywhere because White's King is already in that area of the board.

Naturally, if both sides had castled queenside, then the kingside majority would be superior to a majority of pawns on the queenside.

Queenside Majority Versus Central Majority

In an endgame, the QUEENSIDE MAJORITY is generally better than a CENTRAL MAJORITY. However, in a middlegame the central majority is considered to be more valuable because these pawns grab space in the most important area of the board.

(260)



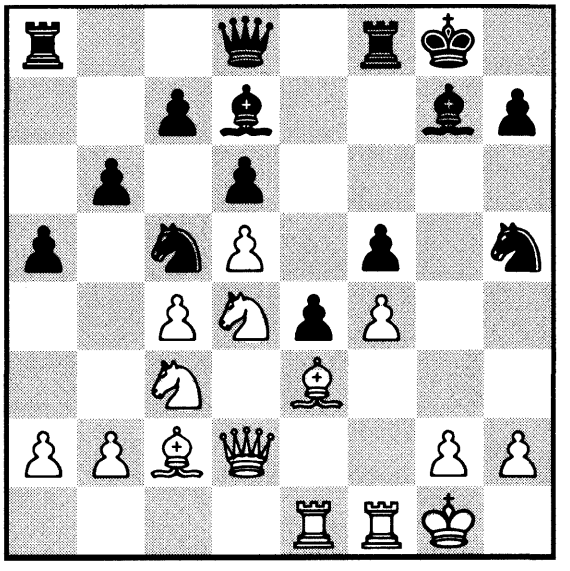
(CENTRAL MAJORITY versus QUEENSIDE MAJORITY, Black to move)

Black can get his central majority rolling by **1...e5** followed by **2...f5**. This central pawn roller is considerably more threatening than White's queenside sleepers.

RESTRICTION

Though popularized by Nimzovich in the early 1900s, restrictive strategy has become a common ingredient in every chessplayer's game. Things like RESTRICTION, BLOCKADE and PROPHYLAXIS are all part of the same idea: to stop the opponent from utilizing some plan or idea.

(261)



(Black to play and restrict)

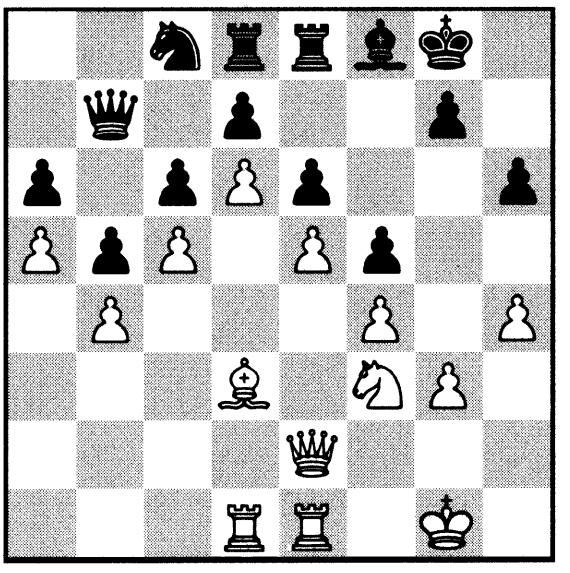
Here we see a common scenario in the King's Indian Defense. White would like to prepare g2-g4 by h2-h3, Kh2, Rg1, etc.; maneuvers like Nc3-d1-e3 can also be considered. This advance would undermine Black's pawn on e4 and gain quite a bit of kingside space. Black must restrict the movement of White's g-pawn and try to get counterplay on the g-file. His correct plan is: **1...Nf6** (hitting the g4-square) **2.h3 h5** when ...Qd8-e8-g6 creates a real clamp on the g4-square.

SPACE

When we own a garden, we usually map out our territory by building a fence. In chess, we also build fences, but instead of wood we make use of pawns.

If we look at a line of pawns as a fence, we can see that the area behind these foot soldiers is their property—they have claimed it and put up borders that announce their ownership.

(262)



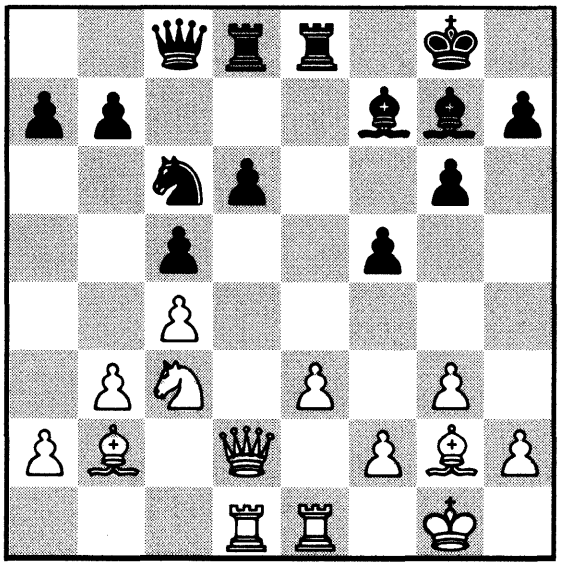
(White's pawns give him a huge SPACE advantage)

Extra property is advantageous for one simple reason: the more SPACE we possess, the more room our pieces have to move about in. Using this logic, we can say that the side with more space should avoid exchanges since this would give more room to the boxed-in enemy. Reversing this, the defender should actively seek trades, since that would transform the cramped quarters into something a bit easier to tolerate.

SQUARES

Playing for dominance of one single little SQUARE is a hard concept for many amateurs to fully understand. Nevertheless, the idea of fighting for squares instead of material or attack is extremely important and must be appreciated if the student wishes to improve his/her game.

(263)



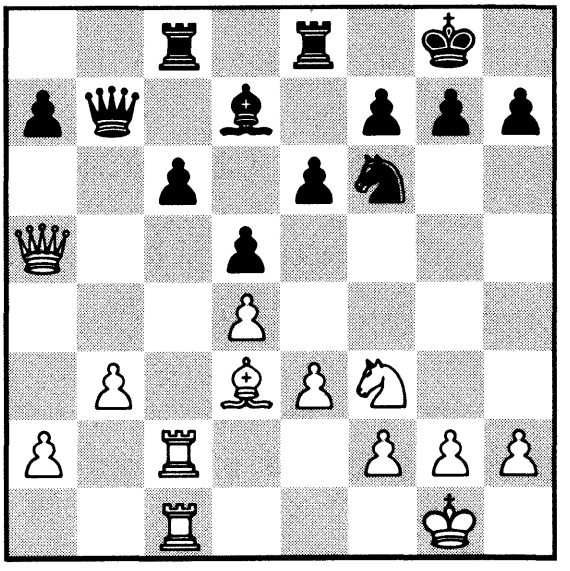
(The SQUARE on d5 is owned by White)

The reason one plays for control of a square (an undefended square is also known as a HOLE) is that it will usually prove to be an excellent home for a Knight or a Bishop (though other pieces can also gain from laying claim to such a hole). Once your piece reaches this hole, it will inevitably be more valuable than its counterpart on the other side of the board. In a sense then, the gain of a square allows you to gain materially also, simply because your pieces become more valuable than the opponent's.

STATIC VERSUS DYNAMIC ADVANTAGES

A STATIC advantage is a long-term plus that is usually based on pawn structure (weak enemy pawns, strong center, extra space, etc.), extra material, or superior minor pieces (strong Knight versus bad Bishop).

(264)

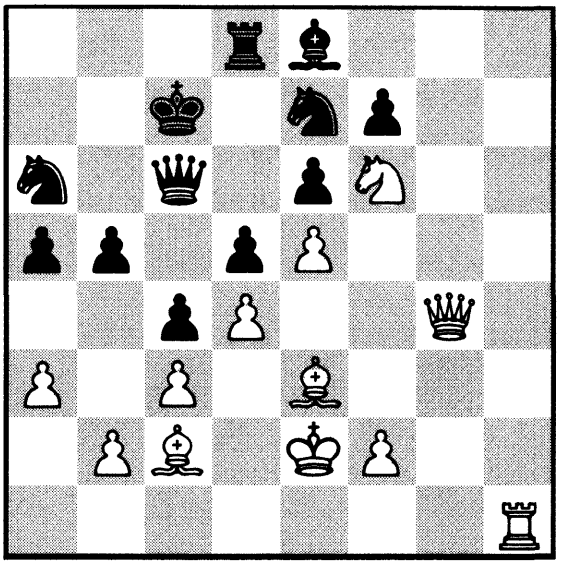


(Black's weak c-pawn will bother him throughout this game)

Gaining such an advantage is highly desirable since it usually lasts right into the endgame. This means that, after you create a weak enemy pawn, you can torture it all through the middlegame and then continue hounding the poor thing even when the endgame appears.

A DYNAMIC advantage centers around temporary items like development, the initiative, and more active pieces. Make sure you make use of this dynamic plus before the opponent catches up in development, your initiative runs dry, or your active pieces are exchanged.

(265)



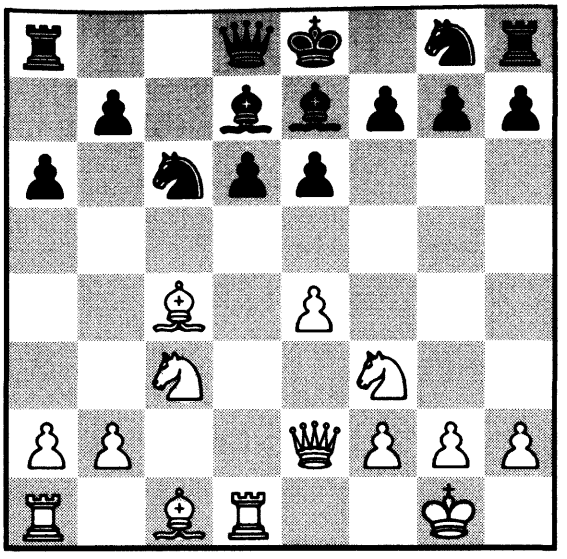
(White's active pieces give him a powerful DYNAMIC plus)

Many games feature one side owning a static (long-lasting) advantage while the other boasts a dynamic (short-term) advantage.

This means that White, for example, might have a far superior pawn structure (static) which he hopes to make use of in the endgame. Black, on the other hand, might have more active pieces (dynamic).

This scenario instantly tells both players what to do: White must activate his own pieces, exchange his inactive ones for the superior enemy guys, or deactivate the hostile units (when his structural plus will tip the scales in his favor); Black must quickly play for a knockout or try to create static pluses of his own before White achieves his goals.

(266)



(Development versus material)

In diagram 266 White is a pawn down (giving Black superior long-term prospects) but his lead in development (a short-term plus) and active pieces give him the initiative. This amounts to a battle of philosophies: Black has squirreled away a nice nest egg for his old age (the endgame) while White is trying to get the maximum amount of rush from the here and now.

In general, the pendulum can swing either way. Imagination and a good set of nerves are the weapons you need most in this kind of position.

SUPPORT POINTS

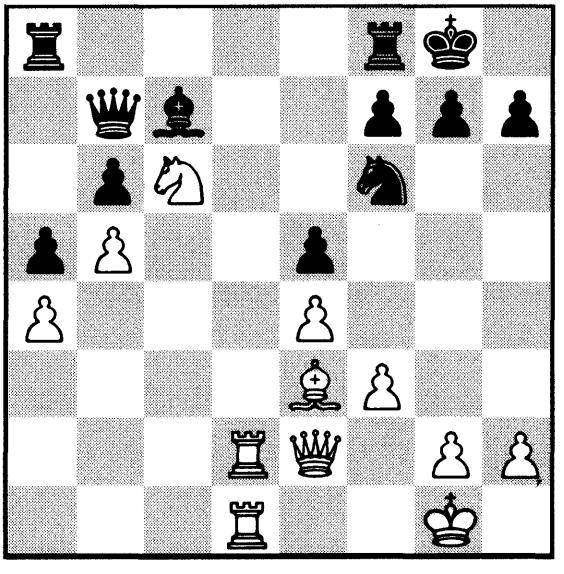
Advanced squares (on the fourth, fifth and sixth ranks) that make nice homes for your pieces are known as SUPPORT POINTS. Also known as weak squares or holes (see Squares, page 272), a support point is so important that its creation can be the point of a whole plan.

In general, a player must be very careful about letting such a square fall into the enemy's hands. Conversely, you should be willing to put a lot of energy into the making of a friendly support point because it will eventually energize whatever piece manages to move there.

Support points make excellent homes for your pieces because:

1) A fortified, advanced square increases the activity of the unit in question.

(267)

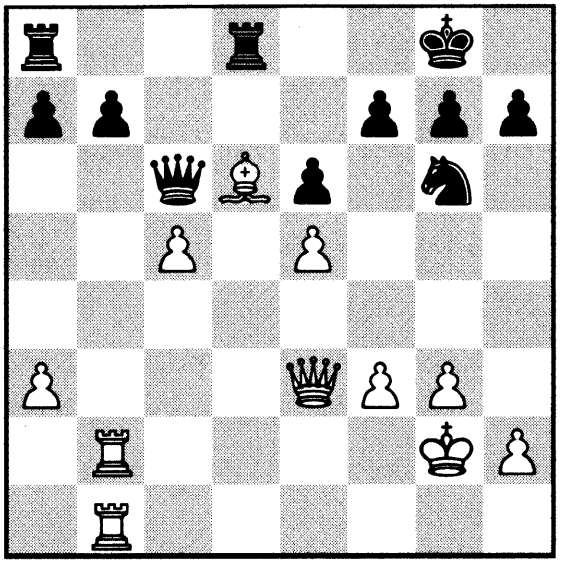


(A SUPPORT POINT on c6)

White's Knight has found a great support point on c6. The Knight tortures Black's entire army from this perch.

2) A support point cannot be attacked by an enemy pawn. This means that the support-square is a permanent home, not just something that can be threatened at the opponent's convenience.

(268)

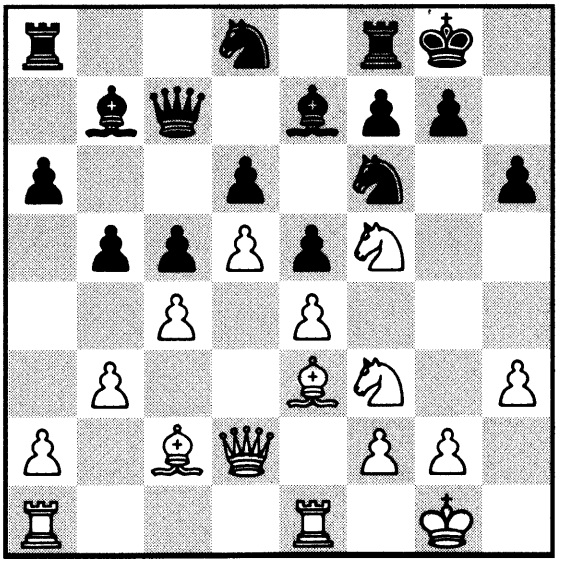


(A SUPPORT POINT on d6)

In diagram 268 the support point on d6 allows White's dark-squared Bishop to sit on it without fear of attack; no enemy pawn can threaten this location.

3) If a support point can be attacked by an enemy pawn, the advance of that pawn would carry severe repercussions (weakens a pawn, weakens another square, etc.).

(269)



(SUPPORT POINT on f5)

In diagram 269 the White Knight is happily placed on f5. Black's g-pawn can chase the horse away by ...g7-g6, but that would leave the h6-pawn hanging and the whole kingside vulnerable.

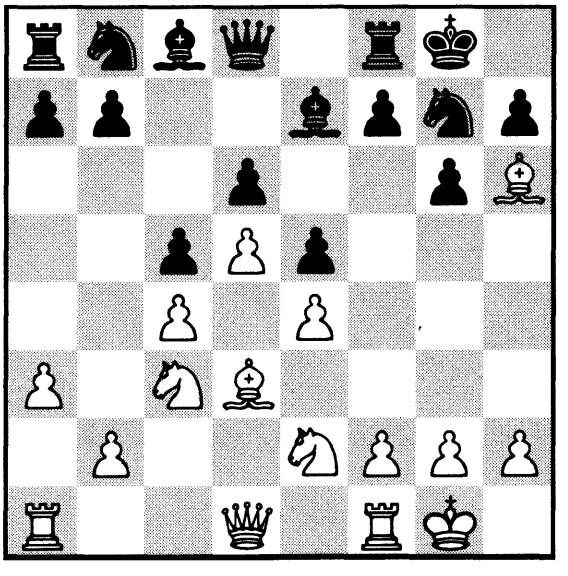
TRADING PIECES

Many beginners have a fear of trading pieces, but this very normal part of the game should be welcomed as long as the exchanges are for units of equal value (see Point Count, page 340).

For example, if you trade a Rook for a Bishop, this would not be an equal exchange because your Rook is a stronger piece than the Bishop (unless other compensating factors exist). However, trading a Rook for a Rook is perfectly acceptable.

Equal trades should only be avoided if your piece is doing a much better job than the equivalent enemy unit. Reversing this logic, it is highly desirable to exchange your bad pieces for the enemy's good ones.

(270)



(Black to play)

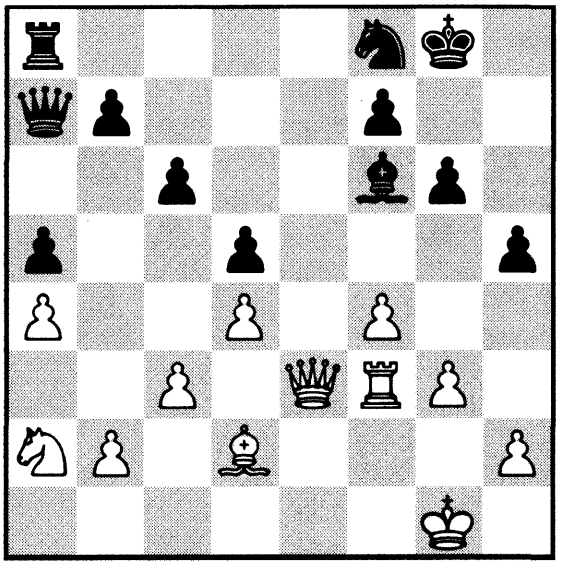
With **1...Bg5!**, Black is able to trade off his very bad Bishop for White's good one on h6. Seeking this kind of exchange (bad piece for good piece) is something that you should always be looking for.

TRAPS

Trying to trick an opponent is a reasonable thing to do if you are completely lost or in trouble, but playing for TRAPS (and crossing your fingers while you do so) is a bad habit that will weaken your play and also your results.

It is very important to ALWAYS expect the best move from your opponent! This means that your moves can have a trap associated with them, but if your opponent sees it (and you should be sure that he will!) you have still improved your position in some way.

(271)



(Black to play)

Black's best move is **1...Ne6!** when White may be tempted by 2.f5?? Nxd4! 3.cxd4 Bxd4 which wins for the second player. So Black played a trap, but his **1...Ne6!** is actually based on positional considerations. Black expects White to see this trap and prevent it by **2.Kg2** or **2.Qe2** when **2...Ng7!** prepares for both ...Re8 and ...Nf5 with advantage.

MIDDLEGAME QUIZZES

Answers to MIddlegame Quizzes can be found on pages 354-357.

1) True or false: It's wise to attack with pawns when the center is open.

2) True or false: It's wise to seek exchanges when your opponent has more space.

3) When your opponent has two Bishops, what should you try to do?

4) What piece is the best blockader of enemy passed pawns?

5) True or false: Bishops tend to be better than Knights in the endgame.

6) What was Steinitz's method of beating Knights?

7) What is ALEKHINE'S GUN?

8) True or false: Doubled pawns are best avoided.

9) What is a MINORITY ATTACK?

10) True or false: A static advantage gives you excellent chances for a knockout blow.

11) True or false: A whole plan can be based on the acquisition of a single square.

12) True or false: Doubled or tripled pawns are known as PAWN ISLANDS.

13) True or false: HANGING PAWNS refer to pawns that are weak or vulnerable.

14) True or false: A passed pawn is always a positive thing to possess.

15) What piece is considered to be the "soul of chess?"

16) True or false: Knights don't work well with each other.

17) What is a MYSTERIOUS ROOK MOVE?

18) What is the INITIATIVE?

19) True or false: A Knight usually gains in value if pawns only exist on one side of the board.

20) True or false: It's okay to be behind in development if the position is closed.

21) True or false: Static advantages are always superior to dynamic advantages.

22) What is a MATING NET?

23) True or false: A sacrifice and a combination are more or less the same thing.

24) What delineates SPACE in a game of chess?

25) What in the world is OVERPROTECTION?

26) True or false: If you are castled and your opponent's King is still in the center, you should get excited and try to see if there's a way to blow him off the board!

27) True or false: Almost all combinations are based on some form of double attack.

28) List the basic imbalances.

29) True or false: Open positions call for piece play rather than pawn play.

30) What is a ZWISCHENZUG?

PART THREE

THE END-GAME

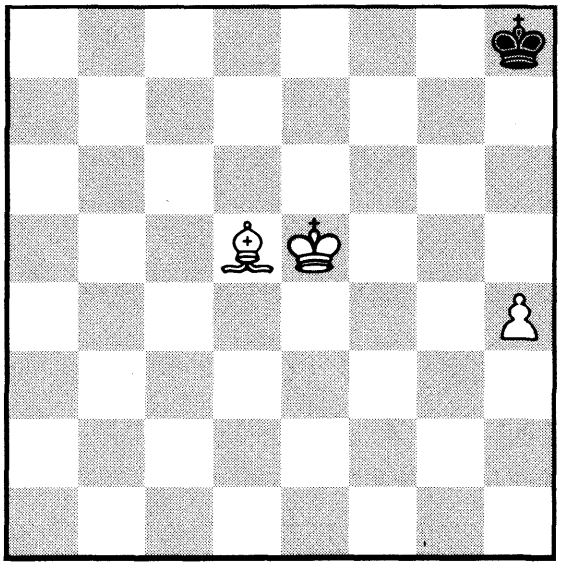
This final phase of a chess game is usually something of a mystery to the amateur. Since the memorization of endgame positions can be dry, many players simply ignore it altogether and hope that a quick middlegame knockout will justify their decision to remain ignorant.

Learning the basics of endgame play is of extreme importance! I can't implore you in strong enough terms to correct your flaws in this area. By doing so you will find that your opening and middlegame play will improve, whole new strategies will suggest themselves, and a newfound confidence will enable you to enter endgames with the strongest of opponents.

BISHOP AND WRONG ROOK PAWN

While King, Bishop and pawn against a lone King win effortlessly under most circumstances, the a-pawn and h-pawn sometimes offers an exception. When one of these pawns promotes on a square of the opposite color to its Bishop, we reach a situation known as the WRONG ROOK PAWN.

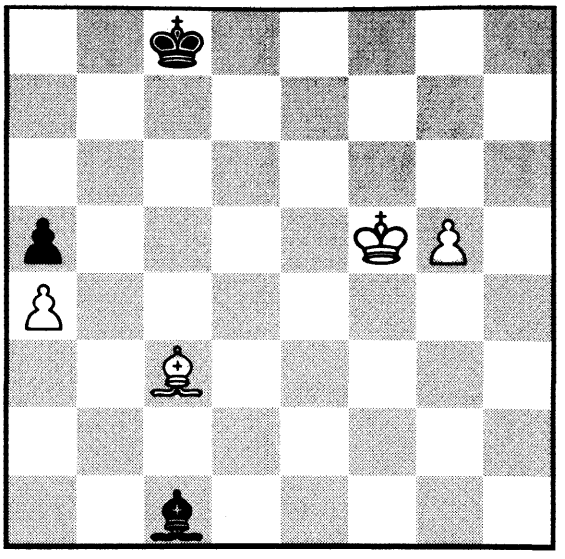
(272)



(The h-pawn will never make it to h8)

Put the White pieces anywhere you like (in diagram 272)—the position is drawn once the Black King reaches the queening square. The presence of a WRONG ROOK PAWN should be a flashing beacon on the path to a draw.

(273)



(Two are not enough)

In diagram 273 it appears that White will soon be two pawns ahead with an easy win, but 1...Bxg5 2.Kxg5 Kb7 snatches a draw from the jaws of defeat.

CAT AND MOUSE

This psychological weapon is mainly used in the endgame, but, on occasion, it can also be see in middlegame situations.

Employed from positions where the opponent is helpless, the idea is to get the enemy off guard, lazy, or a little too confident of his chances to draw the game. You do this, as one well-known master put it, "by taking several moves to do what could have been done in one or two."

Rules and ideas of CAT AND MOUSE:

1) When the opponent is helpless and an obvious win is nowhere to be seen, take your time. Don't panic and try to rush the decision!

2) Don't confuse taking your time with planless play!

3) Before making use of your big breakthrough or big plan, slowly make your position as perfect as possible. Tighten up your pawns, improve the position of your King, place your pieces on their best possible squares.

   Of course, this kind of play depends on your opponent being passively placed. If he can strike back, you can't afford to goof around in this fashion. If he can only sit around and watch you do whatever it is you wish to do, why not set up a dream position before going for his jugular?

4) By taking ten moves to do what could have been done in two, you mask your plans, give your opponent the mistaken feeling that you don't know how to proceed (which could easily lead to the opponent lowering his

guard) and, in the case of a long game, tire him out by forcing him to look for meaning where none exists.

5) When your opponent is helpless, don't be afraid to repeat the position once or twice, as long as it gives him more chances to go wrong.

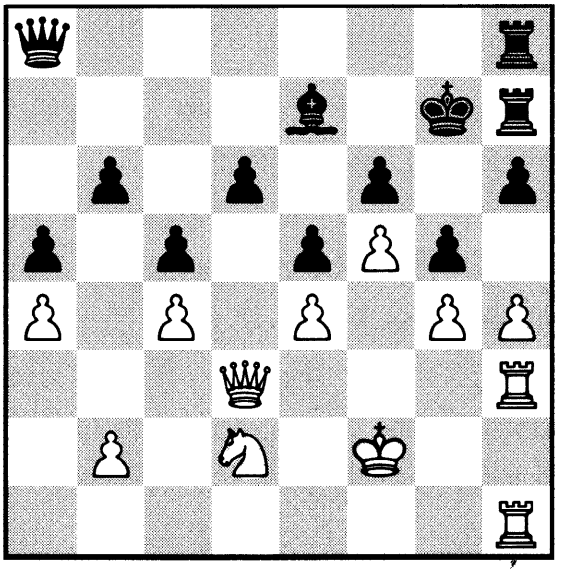
6) Test your opponent whenever possible and force him to show you that he knows what's going on.

7) Patience is a magic word in endgame play. Do your best to acquire this trait.

8) Keep your eyes open! If the situation changes and aggressive play is suddenly called for, throw the cat & mouse strategy out the window and get down to business!

Let's consider the following middlegame scenario: White has several big pulses which add up to Black being completely helpless. Should White go for a quick kill or should he play in a very different manner? The following position will shed some light on this question.

(274)



(White to play and initiate torture)

White has the following advantages:

1) More kingside space.

2) The possibility of a kingside breakthrough with hxg5.

3) Superior minor piece.

4) More active heavy pieces.

5) Support point on d5.

Many players might be tempted to open the h-file right away with **1.hxg5**. However, what's the hurry? Black isn't able to do anything, so White should slowly improve the position of all of his pieces before making use of his ace in the hole (hxg5).

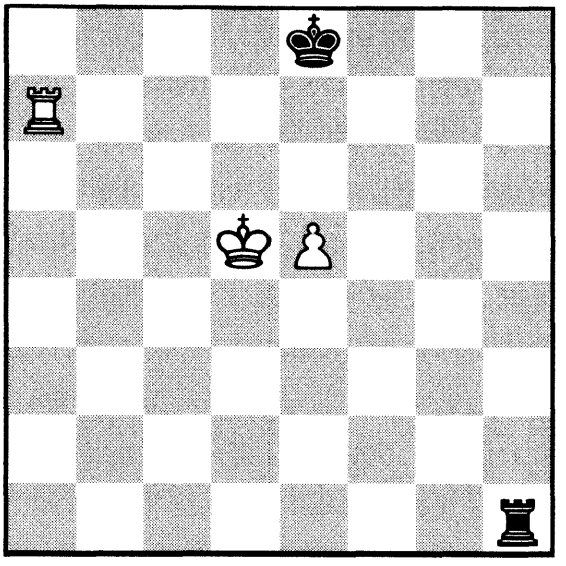
It's important to note that 1.hxg5 hxg5 would allow Black to exchange Rooks on the h-file (before hxg5 the Black Rooks are passive. After hxg5 they suddenly find themselves on an open file). The side with greater space (White) should shy away from unnecessary exchanges, thus hxg5 should be avoided until it carries more weight. This takes us into Nimzovich's, "The threat is stronger than the execution." By threatening to capture on g5, White keeps his opponent off-balance and uncomfortable. A quick capture on g5 would clarify the situation for Black and make life much easier for him.

The first thing White should do is to improve the position of his Knight by **1.Nf1** followed by Ne3 (there isn't much Black can do). The following line of play makes sense: **1.Nf1 Qc6 2.b3** Tightening the pawns on a4 and c4. **2...Qa8 3.Qf3** This brings the Queen to the kingside, eyes g4 and h5, and prepares to add even more pressure to the h-file. **3...Qe8 4.Ne3 Bd8 5.Rh1h2** White improves each and every piece before initiating decisive action. This move opens up the h1-square for the White Queen. **5...Be7 6.Nd5 Bd8 7.Qh1** Setting up ALEKHINE'S GUN. Now hxg5 is a real threat. **7...Qg8 8.Kf3** Giving g4 more support. White could also have marched his King over to the queenside if he felt the need to do so. This shows just how helpless Black really is. **8...gxh4 9.Rxh4** and Black's misery is only just beginning! Under cover of Black's impotence, White will continue to build with Rh5, Qh1-c1-d2 (eyeing both the d-file and the h6-pawn), and Nd5-e3-g2-h4-g6.

It's clear that the "mouse" wasn't having any fun in this position and, sooner or later, his position would spring a leak and sink under the waves of his agony.

Our next example of cat and mouse is much more complex, but still shows the stronger side taking his time and making use of that magic word: patience.

(275)



(White to move and test his opponent)

This position shows White trying to win a theoretically drawn game. Draw or no draw, this shouldn't stop White from (patiently!) putting Black through his paces. White's first move is straightforward and forces Black to find the one good defensive plan: **1.Kd6** Now 1...Rh6+?? 2.e6 wins for White, as does 1...Rd1+?? 2.Ke6. **1...Re1!** Passing the first test. **2.Ke6 Kf8** Passing the second test by moving his King to the "short side" of the board. **3.Ra8+ Kg7 4.Kd6** White's main attempt is 4.Re8, but what's the harm of throwing this try in first? If Black fails to come up with the correct defense then White wins, while if Black finds the right continuation the same position will be repeated and White can give the Re8 idea a go. **4...Kf7!** Black evidently knows what he is doing. This stops the threatened e5-e6 and avoids 4...Rd1+?? 5.Ke7. **5.Ra7+** This calmly forces the creation of an earlier position. **5...Ke8 6.Ke6 Kf8 7.Ra8+ Kg7** Now we're back to the position that arose after 3...Kg7. **8.Re8** This threatens to win by 9.Kd7 since now the e5-pawn is defended. **8...Ra1!** Creating checking distance on the long side of the board. The threat of ...Ra6+ forces White to change his plans. **9.Rd8** White announces that his Rook will be able to block any lateral checks. **9...Re1!**

This key idea stops White's King from moving to d7 or e7 and ultimately prevents the pawn from moving to e6. **10.Kd6 Kf7!** and White isn't making any progress.

Many players will find the moves to this endgame to be way over their heads. Don't despair! All I wanted you to notice was that White was perfectly happy to repeat the position in an effort to test Black in every way possible. The fact that Black played perfectly and drew the game reflects well on Black's knowledge, but doesn't cast any kind of cloud over White's calm and persistent strategy. You should always *expect* your opponent to find the best move—but also make him prove it.

EXCHANGING

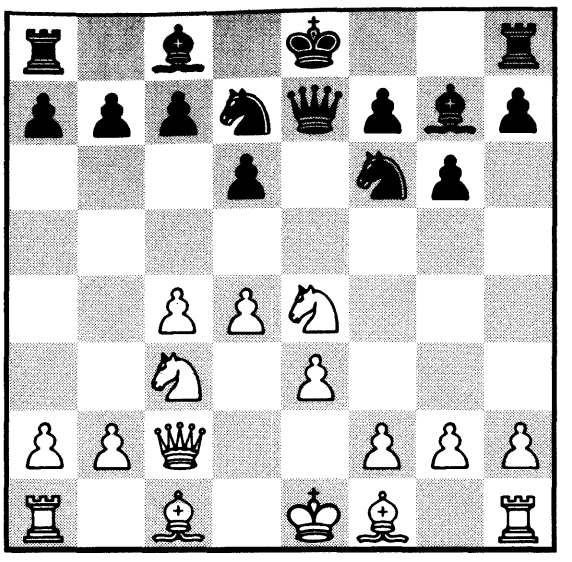
This subject was already discussed under Trading Pieces in the Middlegame section (page 279). However, I would like to add one more thought since many players feel that, once you win a pawn, all you have to do is trade pieces and secure the victory.

Getting a huge advantage in pawn structure or a material advantage may give you a won game, but you still have to win it. Mindlessly trying to trade pieces is a mistake because you are no longer playing chess; you are no longer trying to create new targets in the enemy camp.

When you are lucky enough to get some sort of advantage that would translate into a win in an endgame, look at it as "endgame odds" (meaning that you will win almost any endgame that is reached). This is a very useful thing since now your opponent can't exchange pieces in the usual manner.

Armed with this "endgame odds," continue to play for a win in the middlegame by creating new advantages in structure and piece activity, by giving the opponent new weaknesses to worry about, and by trying to improve your position in every way possible. The following position is from an amateur game between two "B" class players.

(276)



(White to move; a typical dilemma)

White is a pawn up for nothing and now decides that he will win the game if he trades off all the pieces. Ignoring his positional trumps, White broke a key rule (never trade a good piece for a poor one) and snatched the Knight on f6. **1.Nxf6+** Much better was 1.Bd3 when 1...Nxe4 2.Bxe4 f5 3.Bd3 Bxd4?? 4 Nd5 wins instantly for White. **1...Nxf6** White has succeeded in trading off his good e4-Knight for Black's passive Knight on d7. To make matters worse, White has also freed the c8-h3 diagonal for Black's Bishop. **2.Be2** Another odd choice. The obvious 2 Bd3 seemed more natural. **2...Bf5** Black forces another trade but White, of course, should not be too upset by this. Don't forget that his extra pawn gives him endgame odds! **3.Bd3 Bxd3 4.Qxd3 0-0 5.0-0 c6**. Now White could play the very natural 6 e4, getting some mileage from his extra center pawn (why not put the lazy thing to work?). Instead he pursued some queenside space. **6.b4** Not a bad move, though the club experts criticized it. Why not gain a new advantage in the form of queenside space? **6...a6 7.Bb2 b5** and now White should have played **8.a4** when **8...bxa4 9.Rxa4** (followed by Rfa1) gives White crushing pressure against a6, while **8...bxc4 9.Qxc4** turns c6 into a burden.

In this game White should try hard to create new targets (weak pawns on a6 or c6) or advantages (strong center with e3-e4). The mere fact that his extra pawn exists will drive his

opponent mad with worry, but the win still requires a middle-game plan and some strong moves; your opponent won't give up without a fight so don't relax until he lays down his arms and resigns.

MINOR PIECES IN THE ENDGAME

Making correct use of your minor pieces in the endgame may turn out to be a bit confusing. Strangely enough, what was thought to be good strategy in the middlegame will often turn out to be completely incorrect when the endgame arrives.

The common rules that apply in both middlegames and endgames are:

1) Bishops need open positions to show their full power.

2) A Knight's ability to jump over other men is best shown in closed positions.

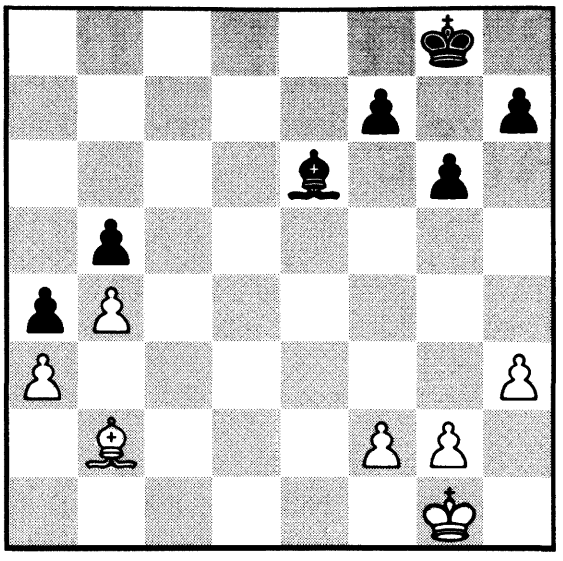
3) Two Knights don't work together well; they do the same thing and trip over each other in their clumsy efforts to hop down the board.

4) Two Bishops complement each other due to the fact that each one controls a different colored diagonal.

Rules that change when the endgame is reached (or simply don't exist in the middlegame) are:

1) In the middlegame you should place your pawns on the same color as the enemy Bishop (to restrict it). In the endgame you should place your pawns on the opposite color of the enemy Bishop so that the Bishop can't attack them.

(277)



(Good endgame, bad middlegame)

Black's pawns are all on light-colored squares and, as a result, are immune from the enemy Bishop. In a middlegame (toss a Queen and some Rooks and Knights onto the board), this formation would be bad for Black because White's b2-Bishop owns the dark-squares around the Black King. A White Queen on f6, for example, would place the Black King in mortal danger.

Instead of the f7, g6, h7 pawn structure, Black would be much happier (in a middlegame!) with pawns on f6, g7, h7 since that would block the b2-Bishop and hinder its activity.

2) Positions with passed pawns on both sides of the board are vastly in favor of the side who owns the Bishop over the enemy Knight.

See Minor Pieces, diagram 204 (page 212) for an excellent example of this.

3) When pawns are on only one side of the board, a Knight is superior to a Bishop. The reason for this lies with the Bishop's long-range powers, which have now become useless. On the other hand, the Knight's ability to attack any color square takes on great significance.

See Minor Pieces, diagram 211 (page 217) for an example of this.

PASSED PAWNS IN THE ENDGAME

Most players take it for granted that a PASSED PAWN will give them a significant advantage in an endgame (I already showed that passed pawns are not necessarily a good thing in the middlegame). While this "passed pawn in the endgame worship" is justified in many positions (as will be shown, passed pawns really shine in Queen and pawn endgames), a passed pawn can easily turn out to be unimportant if it's weak, if the enemy King occupies a dominant position, or if the enemy's remaining pieces are more active than yours.

You must also take into account the possibility that your passed pawn is, in some way, inferior to your opponent's. The information in the following parts should help to dispel some of the myths surrounding these strong but misunderstood runners.

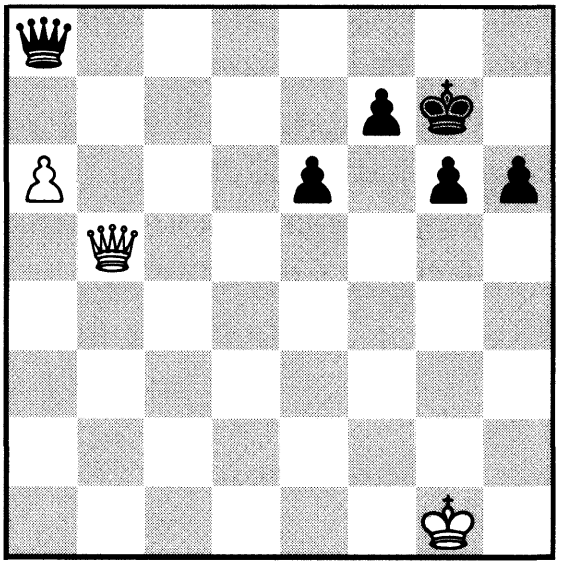
Passed Pawns in a Queen Endgame

PASSED PAWNS are very useful creatures in King and pawn endgames but, when considering other types of endings, the venerable passer shows its stuff best when Queens are on the board.

The reason for this is that most pieces, teamed up with a lone pawn, can't force the pawn through to promotion (there are always exceptions, of course). However, a Queen and passed pawn versus a Queen is unstoppable unless the defending side can get help from some other piece or can create a perpetual check while the pawn is dashing across the board for a touchdown.

A passed pawn is so powerful in a Queen endgame that material often takes a back seat to whoever owns the pawn that is closest to promotion.

(278)



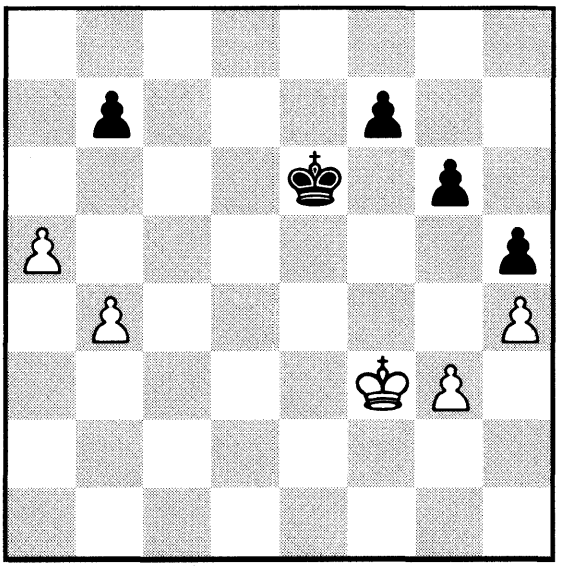
(Black is trying to draw!)

Though White is three pawns behind, his passed a-pawn is so far down the board that Black must scramble for a draw by perpetual check. **1.Qb7** This is how a Queen can escort its pawn to the endzone. By defending the pawn and also taking control of the a7 and a8 squares, Black is forced to beg for mercy! **1...Qd8 2.a7 Qd1+** and White's King won't be able to escape the checks. 1/2-1/2.

Pawn Majorities and Outside Passed Pawns

In an endgame, the MAJORITY furthest away from the Kings is extremely valuable. The reason for this is that this "outside" majority will eventually translate into a powerful outside passed pawn (one that is at a distance from the remaining pawns).

(279)



(The QUEENSIDE MAJORITY wins)

White's queenside majority wins the game because it can quickly turn into an outside passed pawn. The resultant outside passer will pull the enemy King away from the kingside, allowing White's monarch to feed on all the Black units in that area. **1.b5 Kd6 2.a6 bxa6 3.bxa6 Kc6 4.Ke4 f6 5.a7** Pulling the Black King away from the d5-square. **5...Kb7 6.Kd5 Kxa7 7.Ke6 g5** This leaves White with a Rook-pawn. Nevertheless, White still manages to win by one tempo. **8.Kxf6 gxh4 9.gxh4 Kb7 10.Kg6 Kc7 11.Kxh5 Kd7 12.Kg6 Ke7 13.Kg7** and White's pawn will turn into a Queen.

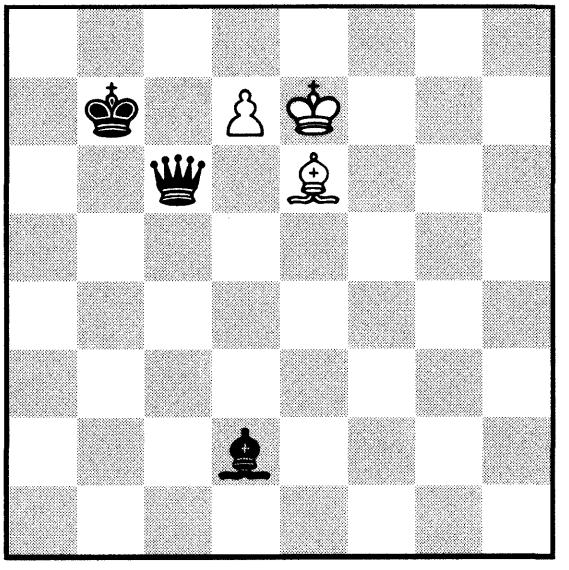
When you own an outside passed pawn, the natural way to use it is: draw the enemy King to the other side of the board by pushing (and ultimately sacrificing) your pawn. Once his King is away from its own nest of pawns, sneak your King in and eat everything in sight!

Promotion and Underpromotion

All pawns are baby Queens that dream of reaching maturity. Though the rules allow us to turn a pawn into virtually any piece other than a King, we almost always choose a Queen simply because it's the strongest piece on the board.

UNDERPROMOTION, the act of turning the pawn into something other than a Queen, usually comes about in situations where the opponent threatens to fork, skewer or mate you.

(280)

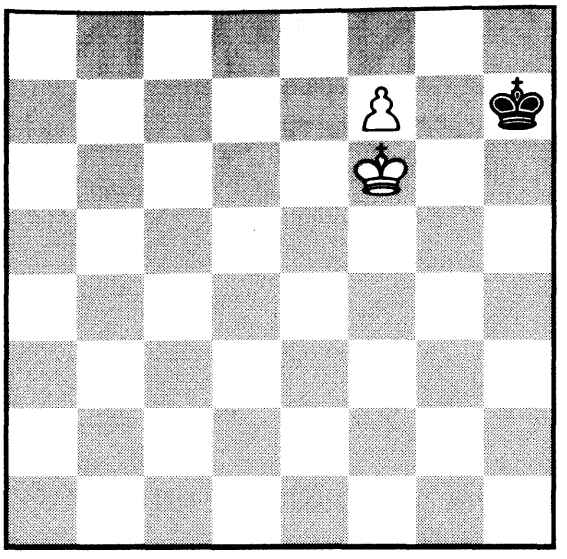


(The cavalry to the rescue!)

White would lose if he played the automatic 1.d8=Q since 1...Bg5+ skewers the White King and the newborn Queen. Correct is **1.d8=N+!**. This underpromotion forks the Black King and Queen and draws the game.

Underpromotion also comes about when the stronger side wants to prevent a possible stalemate.

(281)



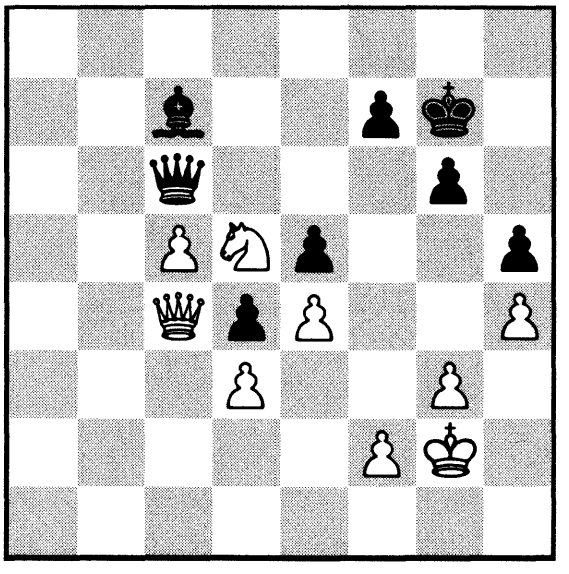
(White to move and mate in two)

If White wasn't paying attention and turned his pawn into a Queen by 1.f8=Q??, the game would end in a draw by stalemate. However, after the correct **1.f8=R** the game ends quickly with a forced mate: **1...Kh6 2.Rh8 mate**.

QUEEN AND MINOR PIECE FIGHTS

In an endgame, a Queen and Knight tend to work together better than a Queen and Bishop. The reason for this is simple and logical: a Bishop and a Queen have the same power (diagonal movement) and don't add anything new to their potential. A Queen and Knight have different powers, and these differences often are quite complementary.

(282)



(The nimble White Knight kicks the enemy Queen around)

The diagram shows us a situation where the White Knight torments Black's Queen and Bishop. With **1.Nb4** the Knight breaks the blockade on c6. After **1...Qe8 2.c6** the Knight will return to d5 and begin to strike at the c7-Bishop (Black won't be able to retain that blockade since the Knight, mixed with White's Queen moving to b7, will prove too strong).

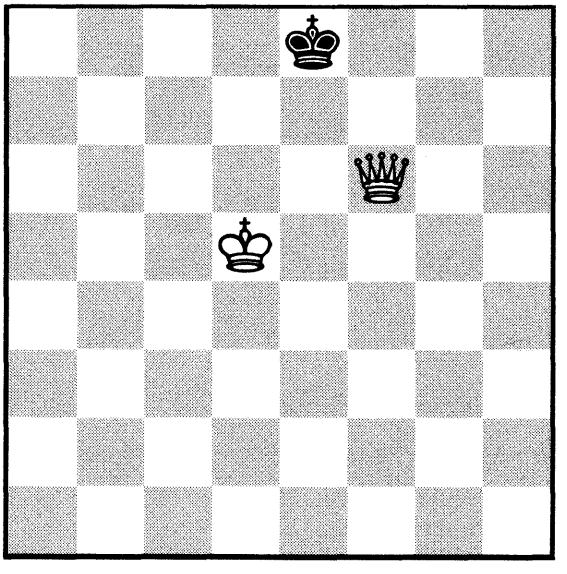
The Queen and Knight defeated the Queen and Bishop because the mix of Queen and Knight can double up against any colored square. The poor Queen and Bishop are limited by the Bishop's prison sentence on the dark-colored squares.

STALEMATE

A surprising STALEMATE is the chess God's way to punish overconfidence. The ability to draw a game while down huge amounts of material has convinced many players to play on to the bitter end, and the phrase, "Nobody has ever won or drawn a game by resigning." may have been originally spoken with stalemate in mind (IM Saidy's rebuttal also deserves to be quoted: "Nobody ever won a game by resigning, but resignation sure saves you lots of agony and wasted time.").

The most basic forms of stalemate occur in trivial endgames like the one in diagram 283.

(283)

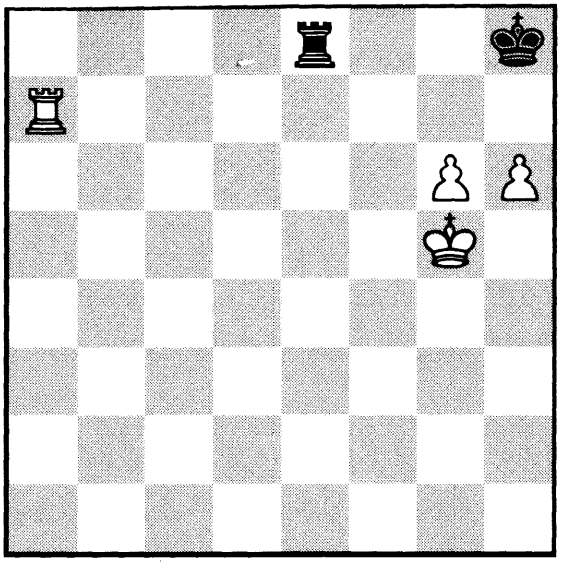


(White to move and throw the victory out the window)

White is a Queen up and mate in three would follow **1.Qg7 Kd8 2.Kd6 Kc8 3.Qc7 mate**. However, many players have fallen for 1.Ke6?? when Black is stalemated and the game is drawn.

Of course, this silly stalemate won't happen in games between good players, but subtler examples often come up where even the best players fall on their face.

(284)



(White to move and give away half a point)

This position is easily won, but one common error is **1.h7??** which, though it threatens 2.Kh6 followed by 3.g7 mate, makes the monumental mistake of stalemating the enemy King. Black jumps on White's error with **1...Re5+ 2.Kf6 Re6+! 3.Kf7** Naturally, 3.Kxe6 is a draw by stalemate. **3...Rxg6!**, 1/2-1/2 since 4.Kxg6 is stalemate.

What did these examples teach us? In a nutshell, always be on the lookout for stalemate possibilities if you are the defender, and watch out for them if the win seems to be so easy that your attention begins to waver.

USING THE KING

Throughout a chess game a player is forced to hide his King away on the sidelines so that it doesn't get mated by the enemy army. Once the pieces get traded away, however, the Kings can and should come out of their nests and take an active part in the battle.

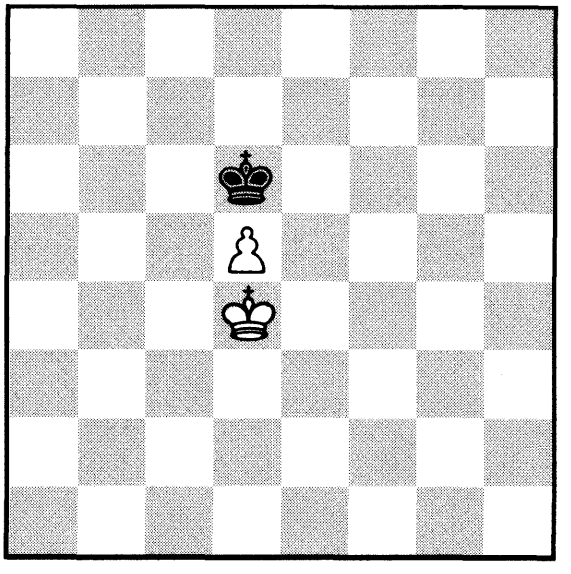
In general, once an endgame is reached you must rush your King to the center as fast as you can! The King is actually a very powerful piece and failure to use it will result in many unnecessary defeats.

King and Pawn versus King

This kind of basic endgame is something every tournament player *must* thoroughly understand! Knowledge of the opposition and triangulation is necessary, so you may want to take a peek at those subjects before going any further here.

A King and pawn versus a lone King is a draw if the defending King can get in front of the pawn.

(285)

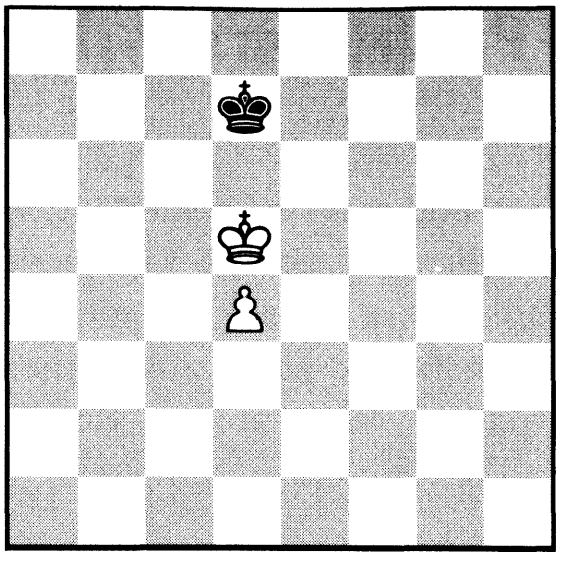


(A simple draw)

To draw this position (diagram 285), Black must jump in front of the pawn whenever he can. If he is forced to move away, he should always step directly back so that he can jump in front of the enemy King when it advances (this takes the opposition). **1.Kc4 Kd7** Less accurate is 1...Kc7 2.Kc5 when White has gained the opposition. **2.Kc5 Kc7 3.d6+ Kd7** Back in front of the pawn! **4.Kd5 Kd8!** Losing is 4...Kc8?? 5.Kc6 Kd8 6.d7 Ke7 7.Kc7 and the pawn will promote. **5.Ke6 Ke8 6.d7+ Kd8 7.Kd6**, 1/2-1/2. The Black King has been stalemated!

If White's King can get in front of its pawn, then the result depends on who will gain the opposition.

(286)



(White to move draws, Black to move loses)

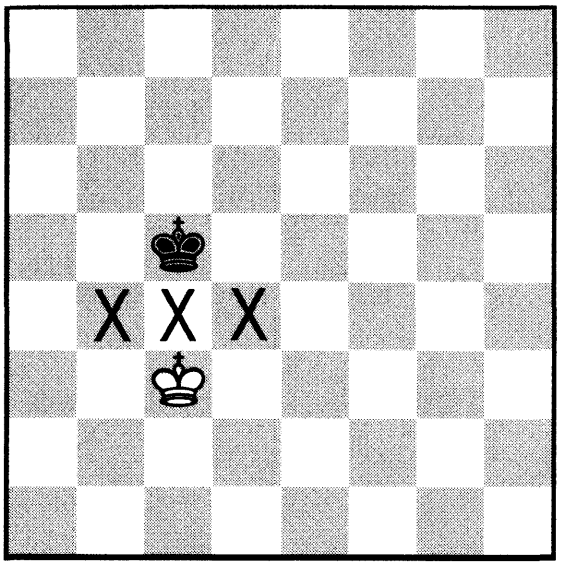
In diagram 286, White to move leaves Black with the opposition and a draw: **1.Kc5 Kc7 2.d5** and we have the same basic drawing situation that we saw in diagram 285.

Black to move loses because the White King will be able to advance and will eventually take control over the queening square: **1...Kc7 2.Ke6** The rule in such endings is to move your King as far forward as possible until your pawn is in danger. **2...Kd8** White meets 2...Kc6 with 3.d5+ Kc7 4.Ke7 followed by 5.d6, 6.d7 and 7.d8=Q. **3.Kd6** Taking the opposition and forcing Black's King to step aside. Also good is 3.d5 Ke8 4.d6 Kd8 5.d7 Kc7 6.Ke7. **3...Ke8 4.Kc7** Grabbing hold of the queening square. **4...Ke7 5.d5** followed by 6.d6, 7.d7 and 8.d8=Q.

Opposition

The main tool a player uses to make one King stronger than another is called the OPPOSITION.

(287)

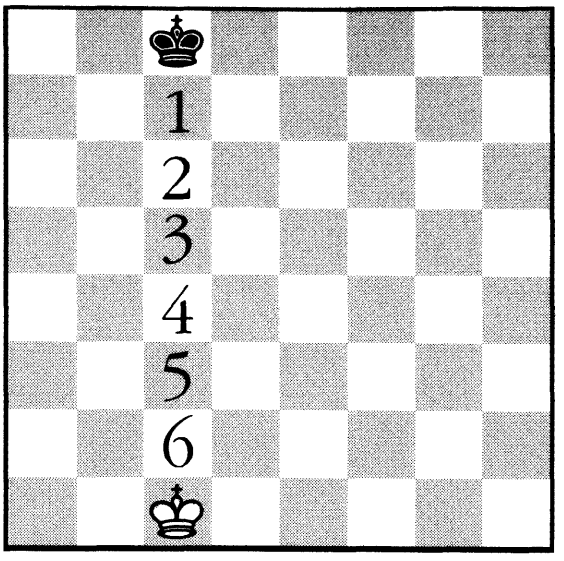


(Bare-bones basic OPPOSITION)

Both Kings would like to advance but they are placed in a way that prevents their counterpart from doing so. In this type of situation, it is disadvantageous to have the move since you must give up control of one of the critical X'd squares and allow the enemy King to advance. With this in mind, we can see that White to move gives Black the opposition since 1.Kd3 allows 1...Kb4, while 1.Kb3 allows 1...Kd4. In both cases, Black's King is making headway into White's position.

Diagram 288 demonstrates the same concept, only in extended form.

(288)

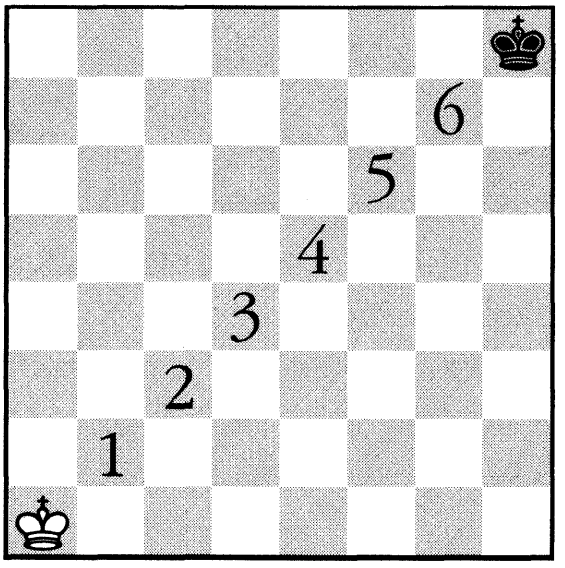


(DISTANT OPPOSITION)

This is called distant opposition. The rule is: Whoever is to move when there is an odd number of squares between the Kings does not have the opposition. The reverse is: Whoever is to move when there is an even number of squares between the Kings does have the opposition. If they continue to walk towards each other, we will arrive at diagram 287 again.

These same rules also apply to diagonals (see diagram 289).

(289)

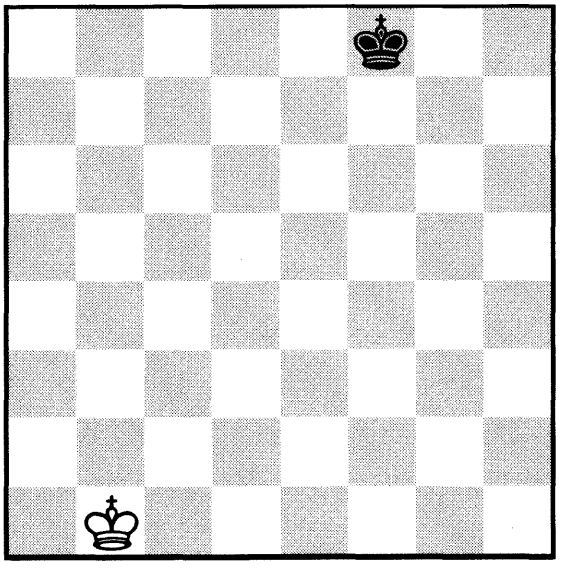


(DIAGONAL OPPOSITION)

If it is White to move, then who has the opposition? The answer is that White does since there is an even number of squares between the Kings. Thus White would play 1.Kb2 which would leave Black on the move with an odd number of squares between the Kings.

It now should not be difficult to determine who has the opposition when the Kings connect on a rank, file, or diagonal. But what if they fail to connect altogether? Does one then need to work out difficult mathematical formulas? Hardly!

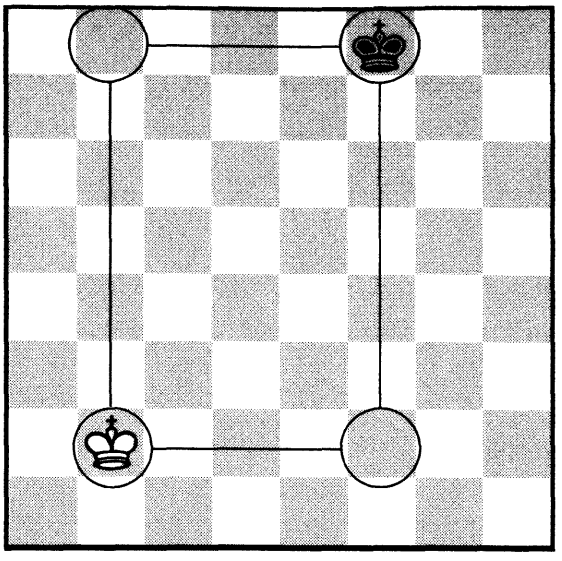
(290)



(White to move and grab the OPPOSITION)

In non-connecting situations the rule is: Move the King to a square or rectangle in which each corner is the same color. Our next diagram illustrates this in a clear way.

(291)



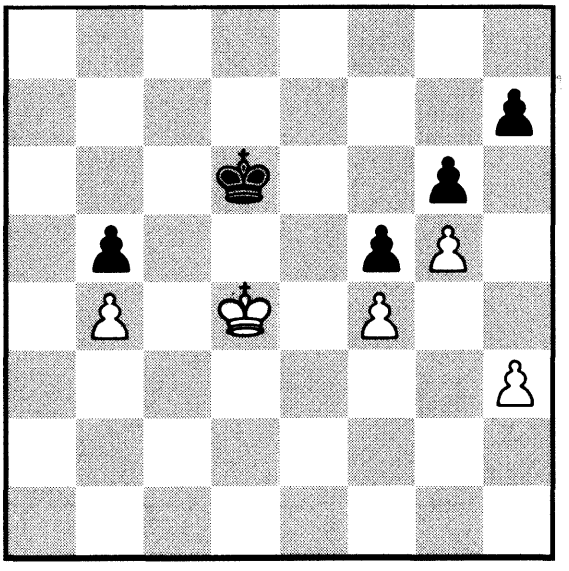
(Every corner is the same color)

White has just played 1.Kb2. The connecting points b2, b8, f8, and f2 are all dark squares and form a rectangle. After 1.Kb2 White has the opposition. Let's see if I'm telling the truth: **1...Ke8** 2...Ke7 3.Ka3 or 2...Kg8 3.Ka2 both give us direct connections. **2.Kc2 Kf8 3.Kd2 Kg8 4.Ke2 Kh8 5.Kf2 Kh7 6.Kf3 Kh8 7.Kf4** and Black can no longer avoid a direct connection (7...Kh7 8.Kf5; 7...Kg7 8.Kg5; 7...Kg8 8.Kg4). Note that each time someone moves, a new series of connection points are formed.

Saving Pawn Moves

It is often a good idea to keep a pawn move or two in reserve in King and pawn endgames. The reason for this lies with the battle for opposition: if it is your move and the opponent is claiming the opposition, a handy pawn move can turn the position on its ear. Diagram 292 illustrates this nicely.

(292)



(White wins by force)

White to move would draw if the h3-pawn stood on h4 because Black would then own the opposition and White's King would not be able to penetrate into the enemy position (White would have to retreat his King).

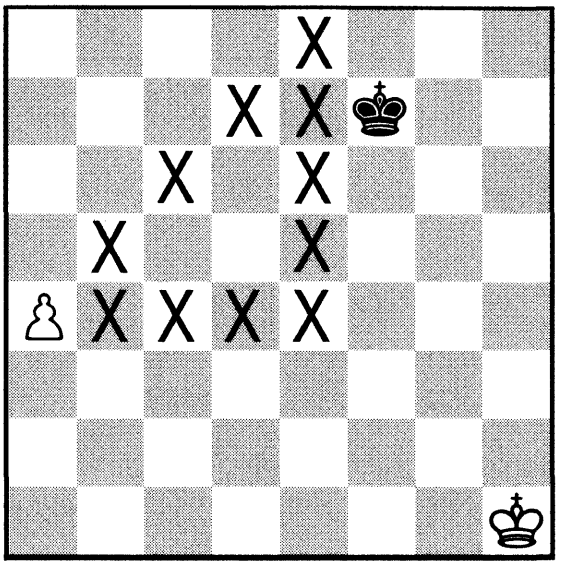
The fact that White's h-pawn is on h3 makes the position a win for White because, after 1.h4, Black's King is the one that has to give ground and, as a result, White's King will decisively enter the hostile position and feed on Black pawns. In other words, White's extra pawn move (h3-h4) takes the opposition from Black!

After **1.h4** the game might proceed as follows: **1...Kc6** Or 1...Ke6 2.Kc5. **2.Ke5 Kb6 3.Kd6** Taking the opposition and forcing the Black King to back away from the b-pawn. Also easy is 3.Kf6 followed by 4.Kg7 and 5.Kxh7. **3...Ka6 4.Kc6 Ka7 5.Kxb5**, 1-0.

Square of the Pawn

At times an enemy pawn will make a run for the queening square and your King will be a distance away. How can you tell if your King will stop the rude pawn? The diagram shows us a simple method to do so.

(293)



(Black's King must be able to enter the SQUARE OF THE PAWN)

The Xs show the border that the Black King must be able to step into if it wants to stop the pawn (this border is known as the SQUARE OF THE PAWN). This border is created by drawing a diagonal extension from a4-e8 and a side extension from a4 to e4. Then connect e8 with e4 and you have the position in the diagram.

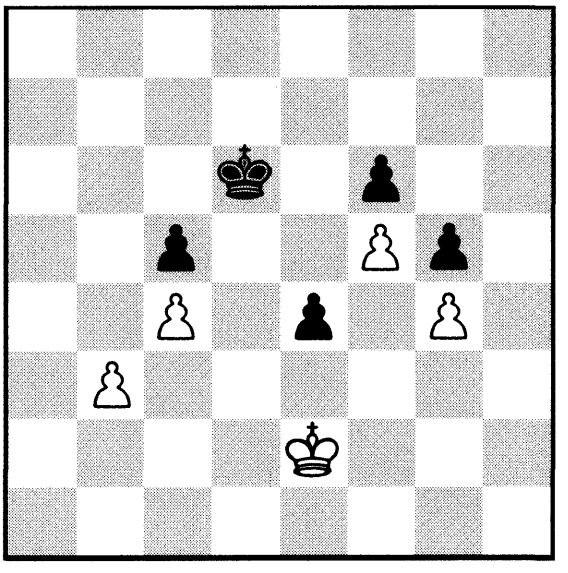
Black to move draws (1...Ke7 2.a5 Kd7 3.a6 Kc7 4.a7 Kb7) because his King can step into the X'd border. White to move wins because **1.a5** creates a new square (a5-d8-d5-a5) that Black's King can't reach.

Triangulation

TRIANGULATION is a big word that makes chess players seem like geniuses (imagine telling your friends: "I'd love to go to the Laker game but tonight I need to make a detailed study of triangulation!"), but the truth is that it stands for a very simple thing.

A device that allows you to fight for the opposition, triangulation calls for you to step to the side with your King before coming forward. This tempo-wasting maneuver turns the move over to the enemy and the opposition over to you.

(294)



(White wins in all lines)

White would win if it were Black to move since **1...Ke5 2.Ke3** gives White the opposition and leads to the win of the e4-pawn (Black must step back and give it up).

White to move calls for a subtler approach since now 1.Ke3?? allows Black to take the opposition with 1...Ke5 when 2.Ke2 Kf4 wins for Black (who will eat all of White's kingside pawns). The correct solution is **1.Kf2!** Also good is 1.Kd2, which takes the distant opposition. **1...Ke5** The tricky 1...e3+ should be met by 2.Kf3!. Instead, 1...e3+ 2.Kxe3?? Ke5 would once again give Black the opposition. **2.Ke3** when White is the one who owns the

opposition. Notice the little triangle White's King made from e2-f2-e3? Believe it or not, that's all there is to it.

For those that are interested, the final moves after **1.Kf2 Ke5 2.Ke3** would be: **2...Kd6 3.Kxe4 Kc6 4.Kd3** White will make an outside passed pawn on the queenside and then march into the kingside and eat everything Black owns **4...Kb6** Or 4...Kd6 5.Kc3 Ke5 6.b4 and White will be the first to promote. **5.Kc3 Ka5 6.b4+! cxb4+ 7.Kb3 Ka6 8.Kxb4 Kb6 9.c5+ Kc6 10.Kc4 Kc7 11.Kd5 Kd7 12.c6+ Kc7 13.Kc5 Kc8 14.Kd6 Kd8 15.Ke6** Giving up the c-pawn for the ripe fruit on f6 and g5. **15...Kc7 16.Kxf6**, 1-0.

USING THE ROOKS

Rook endgames are the most commonly reached endgame, so an acquaintance with their most basic rules is of enormous importance. I've seen so many games, well-played in the opening and middlegame, that have been tossed in the garbage by poor Rook skills.

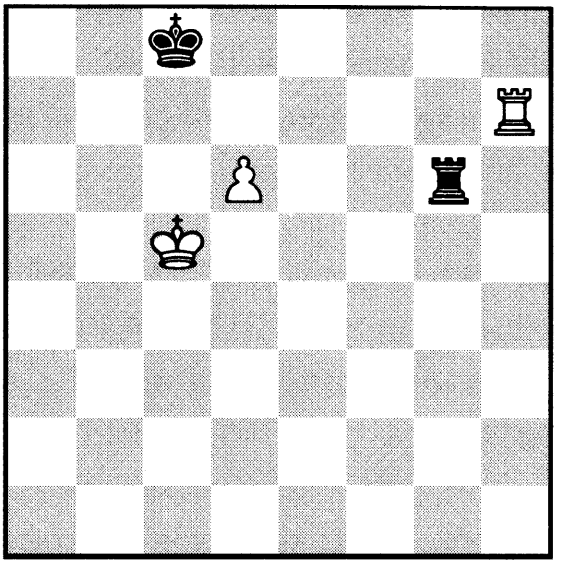
Do you know what the LUCENA POSITION is? Are you familiar with the all-important PHILIDOR POSITION? What about other tidbits of Rook-endgame wisdom? To be honest, if you don't know these things you won't stand a chance in these situations.

The following parts, filled with critical knowledge that's easy to learn, will allow you to enter Rook endgames with confidence.

Active Rook

It is very important never to allow your Rook to become passive. In fact, it's not unusual for a player to sacrifice a pawn if it keeps his Rook actively placed.

(295)



(Black to move)

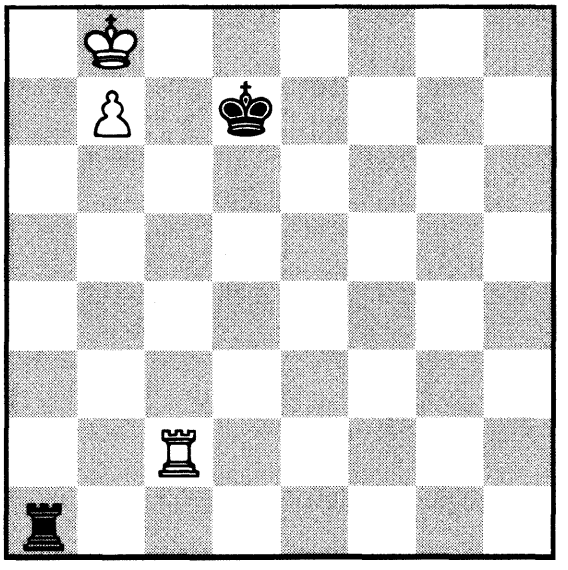
White's Rook is ACTIVE and Black's is passive. Black should correct this problem with 1...Rg1 when his Rook becomes active. The game would then be drawn since Black will torture the White King with long-range checks.

If Black plays the passive **1...Rg8??**, White wins easily by switching over to the other side: **2.Kc6 Rf8 3.Ra7** And not 3.d7+?? Kd8 when White's Rook can't jump to the other side. Never push this pawn unless it is immediately decisive. The pawn acts as cover for your King; pushing it destroys that cover. **3...Kb8 4.Rb7+ Ka8** Avoiding 4...Kc8? 5.d7+ Kd8 6.Rb8+ **5.Rb1** when Black's King has been trapped away from the action. The worst White can now get is an easily winning LUCENA POSITION (see page 319).

Lucena Position

The LUCENA POSITION (first published in 1634!) is the key to understanding any Rook endgame. It is the position that the stronger side strives to achieve and the defending side strives to avoid. Diagram 296 shows the beginning of the Lucena Position.

(296)



(White wins)

If you get your pawn to the seventh rank and your King in front of it, you should win the game (unless the pawn is an a-pawn or h-pawn). The winning technique involves making room for your King by trapping the enemy monarch a file or two away from the action, and then building what is termed a BRIDGE.

Many beginners might try something like 1.Rc7+ Kd8 2.Rc8+ Kd7 3.Rh8 Ra2 4.Rh7+ but after 4...Kd8 White is not getting anywhere. Correct is **1.Rd2+** forcing Black's King to the e-file since 1...Kc6?? 2.Kc8 wins instantly for White. This leads us to one of the biggest rules of Rook endgames:

> *It is always a good idea to trap the enemy King as far away as possible from the scene of the action.*

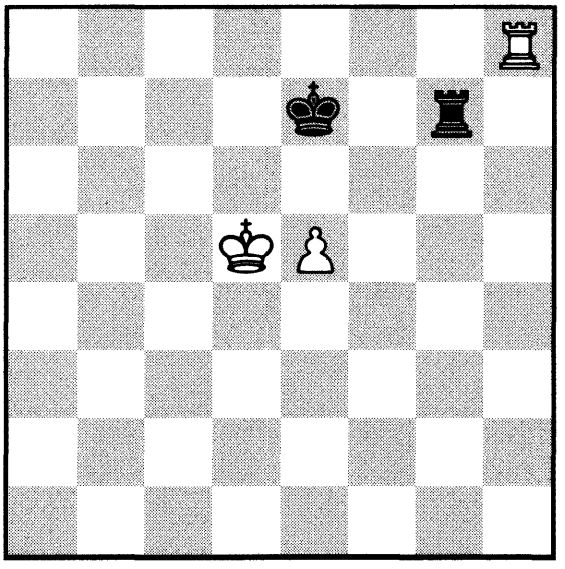
This rule applies to all Rook endgames. **1...Ke7 2.Rd4!** The key to this endgame (this is the maneuver known as BUILDING A

BRIDGE). The logical 2.Kc7 fails to 2...Rc1+ 3.Kb6 Rb1+ 4.Kc6 Rc1+ 5.Kd5 Rb1 and White must return with his King and run back to the hole on b8. The point of 2.Rd4! is that White's King can now come out since its Rook will be able to block the checks. **2...Ke6 3.Kc7 Rc1+ 4.Kb6 Rb1+ 5.Kc6 Rc1+ 6.Kb5 Rb1+ 7.Rb4** and it's time for Black to resign.

Philidor Position

By making use of the PHILIDOR POSITION, you can usually force a draw (in a Rook and pawn versus Rook endgame) a pawn down if you get your King in front of the extra enemy unit.

(297)



(Black draws)

Though White appears to have real chances to win, Black can force a trivial draw by making use of the following ideas and rules:

1) Black will avoid a passive Rook

2) Black will stop the White King from moving to the sixth rank.

3) Black will play to destroy the White King's pawn cover.

The draw is easy to reach by **1...Rg6!** The key move. White's King is deprived of access to the sixth rank. **2.Rh7+ Ke8** Just like in King and pawn versus King positions, it is always a good idea to step straight back from the pawn. Now we can see the point of 1...Rg6: White's King is unable to step forward. **3.e6** Otherwise Black would endlessly move his Rook back and forth along the rank (...Rg6-a6-b6-g6, etc. etc.) and make a draw. Now White

threatens to win with 4.Kd6. **3...Rg1!** By activating the Rook only after the pawn is pushed, White now has no pawn shelter and a draw results since perpetual check by 4...Rd1+ will follow (if White avoids this by 4.Rh4 Black can get an easy draw by 4...Ke7 or he can trade Rooks and go into a dead drawn King and pawn endgame).

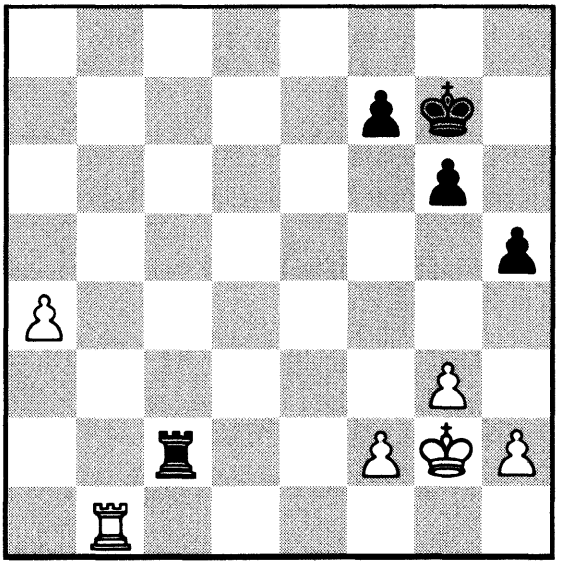
Rooks Behind Passed Pawns

I was once watching a tournament game between a seven-year-old girl (a student of mine) and an adult. They were playing a Rook and pawn endgame when the girl suddenly began to move her Rook away from an active post to a strange place on her first rank.

After the game concluded, I asked her about the strange Rook maneuver. She looked at me as if I was an idiot and said, "Rooks belong behind passed pawns!"

Such wisdom coming from a child is rare, but it's something that every chessplayer would do well to emulate. Rooks do belong behind passed pawns, their own passed pawns and the opponent's passed pawns.

(298)

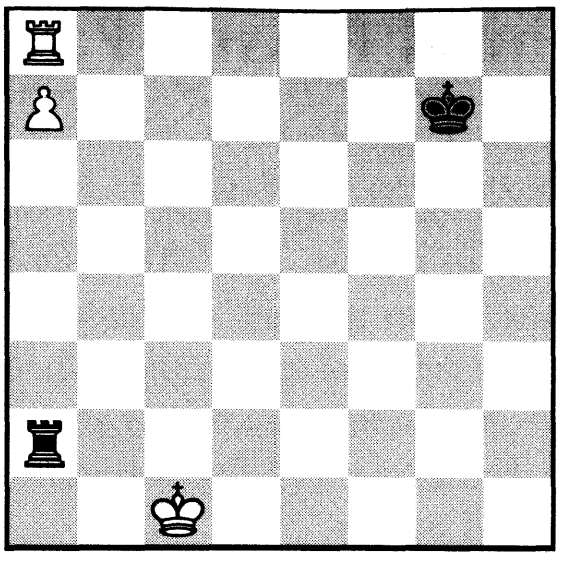


(Make your Rook assume the proper position)

Whoever has the move should be happy here because they would be able to place their Rook behind the passed a-pawn. White to move would play **1.Ra1** when the a-pawn is about to make a mad dash down the board. After **1...Rc6 2.a5 Ra6** the Black Rook would end up in a passive, purely defensive position.

Black to move (in diagram 298) would play **1...Ra2** when his Rook has managed to get behind the passed pawn. After **2.Rb4** the White Rook is stuck guarding the pawn; note that the pawn is unable to move down the board without getting devoured.

(299)



(An important trap!)

This position shows what can happen if the defending Rook gets behind the passed pawn. White's Rook is stuck on the horrible a8-square while Black's Rook is performing an active defense.

Black will draw this game because White's Rook is too passive. To hold the game Black must:

1) Never move his Rook off the a-file (unless it's a check)

2) Never move the Black King off of the h7 and g7-squares.

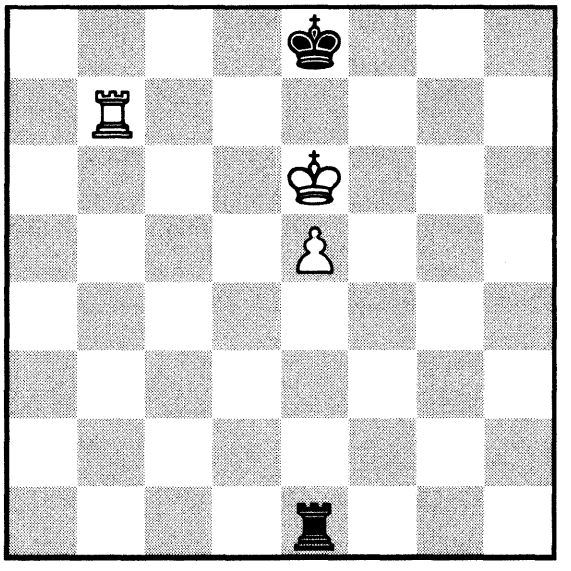
3) When the White King marches down the board and touches its pawn, instantly check it away!

Play could go as follows: **1.Kb1 Ra5 2.Kb2 Kh7** Black might easily fall for a mean trap here. The logical looking 2...Kf7?? loses to 3.Rh8! (threatening to promote the pawn) 3...Rxa7 4.Rh7+ followed by 5.Rxa7 with an extra Rook. **3.Kb3 Ra1** Black must not move his King to its third rank: 3...Kh6?? 4.Rh8+ followed by 5.a8=Q would end the game. **4.Kb4 Kg7 5.Kb5 Kh7 6.Kb6** Now White threatens to free his Rook from its cage on a8. Black must take immediate measures to prevent this! **6...Rb1+** Get away from that pawn! **7.Ka6 Ra1+ 8.Kb7 Rb1+ 9.Kc7 Ra1!** Now that White's King isn't touching its pawn, the Rook must go back to the a-file and stop the White Rook from moving. 1/2-1/2.

Short and Long Sides of the Board

Tournament players often hear terms like CHECKING DISTANCE, the SHORT SIDE OF THE BOARD and the LONG SIDE OF THE BOARD, but few really know what they mean. A diagram is needed to help us out!

(300)



(Black to move and create CHECKING DISTANCE)

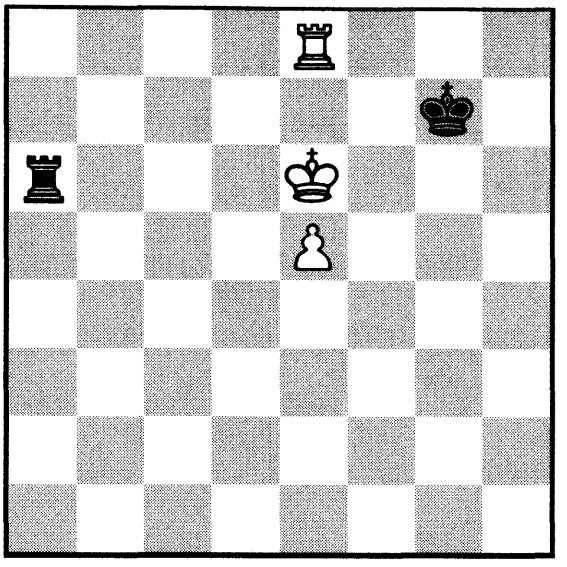
White threatens to mate the Black King with Rb8 mate (this position is examined in more detail on page 290). Since **1...Rd1??** leads to a losing King and pawn endgame after **2.Rb8+ Rd8 3.Rxd8+ Kxd8 4.Kf7**, Black is forced to move his King to either d8 or f8.

In this position, the kingside is the short side of the board since there are only three files to the right of White's pawn. The queenside is the long side since there are four files to the left of the pawn.

If Black moves his King to the short side of the board (which, by the way, is the correct choice) with **1...Kf8**, he will be giving his Rook checking distance since the Black Rook can eventually check on the left without having to worry about running into its King. Note that a Black Rook on a6 (checking White's King) would also be as far away as possible from the White monarch.

This is a good thing, since that prevents the White King from marching over and attacking the Rook.

(301)



(Black's Rook has CHECKING DISTANCE)

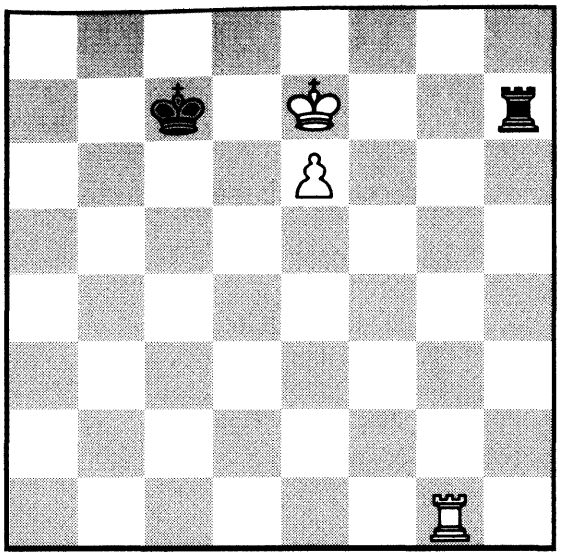
In diagram 301 Black has done everything by the numbers. His King has been wisely placed on the short side of the board while his Rook has checking distance on the a-file.

If Black moves his King to the long side of the board (1...Kd8), his Rook would have an unpleasant choice if it eventually had to give side checks:

1) It could check from the queenside and risk running into its King.

2) It could check from the kingside and discover that it's closer to the enemy monarch than is healthy.

(302)



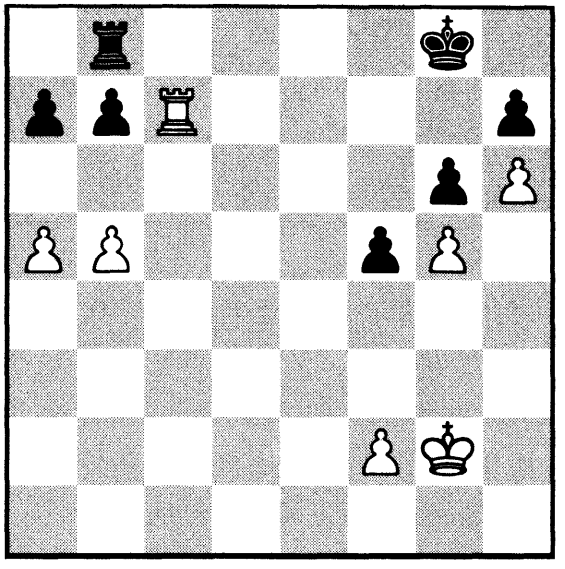
(LONG SIDE King, short term checks)

In this position Black's Rook is too close to the White King; its own King unwisely moved to the long side of the board (which should have been reserved for the Rook). After **1.Kf8 Rh8+** Also losing are 1...Kd6 2.e7 when 2...Rxe7 3.Rd1+ picks up the Black Rook and 2...Rh8+ 3.Kg7 Re8 4.Kf6 Rxe7 5.Rd1+ leads to the same result. **2.Kg7 Re8 3.Kf7** White's King is able to nimbly shuttle between an attack on Black's Rook and the defense of the pawn (courtesy of a lack of checking distance for the Black Rook!).

Two Hogs on the Seventh

Rooks belong on the SEVENTH RANK! Once there they attack masses of enemy pawns and tie the enemy King to its first rank.

(303)



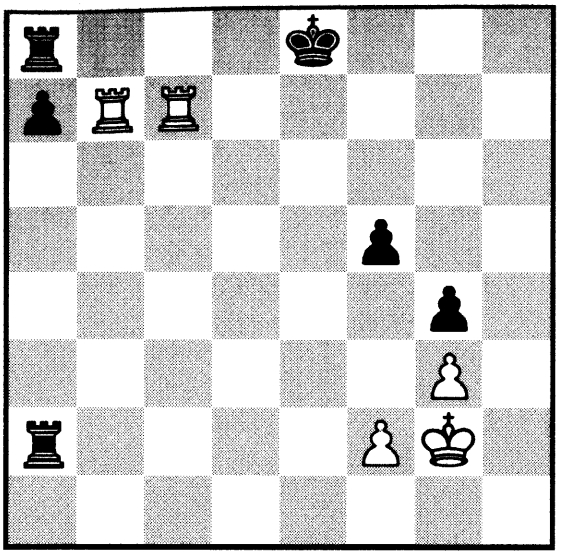
(White's Rook rules the SEVENTH)

This position is completely lost for Black (White wins by marching his King into the Black position). Material is even, but White's Rook is so powerfully placed on the seventh that Black is helpless!

What exactly does the White Rook do on the seventh? It traps the Black King on the first rank, it ties the Black King to the defense of h7, and it ties the Black Rook to the defense of b7.

It stands to reason then, that if one Rook is strong on the seventh, two must be even better! Two Rooks on the seventh rank (often called hogs on the seventh because they tend to eat everything in their way) represent a very powerful combination of pieces that create various mating patterns against the enemy King and also devour everything that steps in their path.

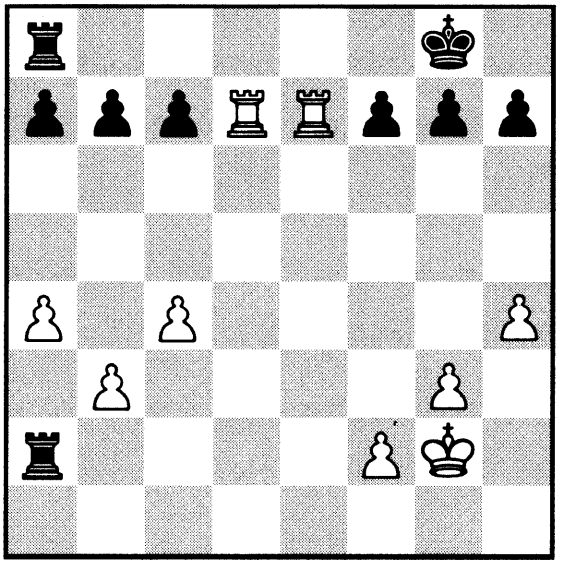
(304)



(White to play)

Though a pawn down, White wins (from diagram 304) due to a commonly occurring mating pattern. 1.Rh7 and Black can't do anything about the threat of Rh8 mate.

(305)



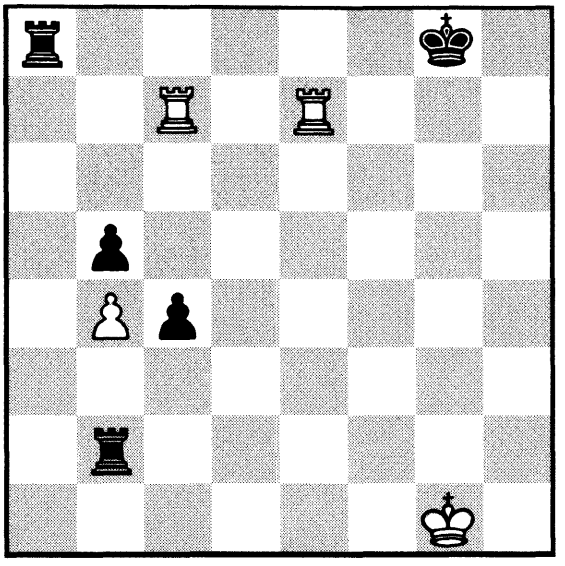
(Hungry Rooks)

In diagram 305 White's Rooks see all of Black's pawns as potential food. After Black guards f7 with **1...Rf8**, White begins the feast with **2.Rxc7** when Black might as well resign.

At times the HOGS don't have anything to chew on and all attempts against the enemy King only lead to a draw by perpetual

check. This kind of seventh rank doubling is known as BLIND SWINE because they "grunt out check" on the seventh rank but aren't able to find a mate.

(306)



(BLIND SWINE)

Black is a pawn up and also threatens to kill the White King with ...Ra1+. Fortunately for the first player, his blind swine are able to force a draw by perpetual check. **1.Rg7+ Kh8 2.Rh7+ Kg8 3.Rhg7+ Kf8 4.Rgf7+**, 1/2-1/2.

ENDGAME QUIZZES

Answers to Endgame Quizzes can be found of pages 358-359.

1) What piece is known as a HOG?

2) True or false: At times it is useful to take several moves to accomplish something that could have been done in just a couple.

3) True or false: When you are up material, it is always a good idea to trade off as many pieces and pawns as possible.

4) True or false: The correct middlegame conduct for minor pieces sometimes varies in the endgame.

5) True or false: A passed pawn is strongest in a Rook endgame.

6) What is an OUTSIDE PASSED PAWN?

7) True or false: A Queen and Bishop tends to be a better combination of forces than a Queen and Knight.

8) True or false: When the endgame is reached, bring your King out slowly so that nothing bad happens to it.

9) True or false: A famous and very useful drawing technique while down a pawn is known as the LUCENA POSITION.

10) True or false: Rooks always belong in front of passed pawns.

PART FOUR

PRACTICAL MATTERS

It is often said that there are three phases to a chess game: opening, middlegame and endgame. Actually, there are several other "invisible" facets to a game that are often overlooked or completely ignored. This section discusses psychological and practical areas that should prove useful to players of all strengths.

BLUNDER

Everyone BLUNDERS (also called HOWLERS in some circles). Material blunders, positional blunders—I've done them all and so will you. At times a blunder will be immediately fatal, but often it will deprive you of a hard-earned edge and will force you to start the beginning process (i.e., building up an advantage) all over again.

If this happens to you, it is very important to free your mind of the emotional baggage that will surely come with your mistake. One way to do this is to leave the board for a few minutes, step outside, breathe some fresh air and tell yourself that you have a completely new position to figure out. Get excited by the new situation, get mad, do whatever it takes to focus your concentration on the board's new situation.

What causes a blunder isn't exactly clear. At times we will miss some subtle threat, but on other occasions we will simply go berserk and do things that a beginner would be ashamed of. Most likely, the main reasons for our bouts of temporary insanity are:

1) EXHAUSTION: Chess is a tiring game. When you have been concentrating for several hours the brain fatigues, our IQ drops to ape-like status and a blunder occurs.

   One way to avoid this kind of mind collapse is to eat something at about the halfway point of a game. However, be careful! The food or drink you consume must not be hard to digest since that would draw the blood from the brain to the stomach (turning you into an instant vegetable!). This same logic tells us never to eat a large meal a couple of hours before a game.

   Proper foods for your mid-game crisis are:

a) Chocolate: One Grandmaster said that "A brain without sugar is not a brain." The great Yugoslav Gligoric used to eat chocolate throughout his games, but many people are sensitive to a white sugar rush, and the cure would turn into a curse when your blood sugar crashed and burned.

b) Fruit juice: Fischer used to imbibe apple juice throughout his games, and this kind of easily digested food is ideal for most people (things like bananas are also ideal, but dried fruit may give you too concentrated a dose of sugar and, as a result, should be avoided).

c) Ginseng: I always found that sucking on a ginseng root kept my mind clicking away. For those that find this a bit too intense, a simple ginseng tea might hit the spot.

Experiment with different foods until you figure out what your body considers acceptable. Everyone has different needs, so spend some time on this matter and take it very seriously!

2) DISTRACTION: You are quietly thinking of a subtle positional idea when the two players on your right get into a fist fight. Don't try to play in such a situation! Ask the director if you can stop your clock until the life and death battle is over. If the distraction is of a personal nature (you notice that someone stole your bag of chess books) and the clock can't be stopped . . . well, good luck. Consider it a test of your mental strength.

3) LOSS OF CONCENTRATION: You are thinking of a key move when suddenly a scene from *Aliens* enters your mind. As its jaws clamp down on your face, your hand twitches and places your Queen on a square where it faces certain death from five different enemy pieces.

When some other thought enters your mind, you have to find a way (deep breathing, meditation, etc.) to

dislodge it and bring yourself back to the game at hand. If you can't do this, a mistake or blunder is very likely to happen.

4) RECURRING PATTERNS: Certain weaknesses may occur in your games over and over again. For example, if you don't understand the concept of weak squares, positional blunders may and *will* arise whenever you reach these situations. If you don't understand the classic tactical motifs (pins, forks, etc.), tactical blunders *will* turn up in an enormous number of your games.

   In order to eradicate this type of blunder, it's a good idea to collect your biggest mistakes and organize them by category (positional blunders, blunders that miss a fork, blunders that miss a pin, etc.). You might find that your mistakes center around a recurring pattern. Once you discover what this pattern is, you should be able to work on that particular area of your game and eliminate the problem.

DRAW OFFER

Too many people are afraid to lose. This may sound trite, but we are all going to lose lots and lots of chess games. Instead of playing like a coward, go all out to win each and every game. You should look at a loss as a learning experience and, accordingly, should refuse all draw offers (even from much higher rated opponents!) unless you feel you stand considerably worse.

The following pointers are worth considering:

1) When you sit down to play, get excited about the prospect of learning something new.

2) Accepting a quick draw from an opponent of any rating won't allow you to learn anything. Play until the board is sterile.

3) When a higher rated player offers you a draw, he is either ill or feels he is in serious trouble. Look at his offer as a sign of weakness and play confidently for the win. If you go on to lose the game you will get a lesson that you would have missed if the draw had been accepted.

4) Never offer a draw. You can do this when you are a professional but, until that time, throw that option out the window:

   a) If you are playing against a weaker player, a draw offer doesn't make any sense at all! Aren't you expected to beat that guy?

   b) If you are playing against an equal player, a draw offer denotes fear.

c) Finally, if you are playing against a higher rated player, it is simply rude to offer a draw. Why? Because he (the higher rated player) will offer that draw when and if *he* wants one. Your offer will be met with a refusal and an insulted look (he will also know you're terrified and gain strength from that knowledge).

5) When word gets out that you play until the bitter end, everyone will start to fear you. A fearless opponent generates panic in everyone.

6) The correct way to offer a draw is to make your move, say something like, "I offer a draw," and then press your clock (this way you don't speak on your opponent's time and disturb him).

If your opponent offers you a draw before he has made his move (a common but illegal practice!), you are well within your rights to just sit quietly and wait for him to either move a piece or lose on time! However, the most polite and to the point answer is, "Make your move and I'll consider it."

Your opponent's incorrect draw offer can't be retracted and you have the right to accept it until you say "no" or until you make your move (which automatically is taken as a refusal). The "Make your move and I'll consider it." reply gives you a lot of flexibility. If your adversary finds a winner you can simply shake his hand and make a game saving draw. If he plays a blunder you can refuse and go on to smash him. (Of course, if his move keeps the game even you should also play on and see if you can wear him down.)

POINT COUNT

This is a mathematical method of giving a relative value to all the pieces. Though useful to beginners, the POINT COUNT system becomes impractical as a player gets stronger simply because a piece must actually be viewed by what it does in a particular situation, not by what it's worth (e.g., an active, advanced Knight, though worth only three points, may prove stronger than a Rook without open files, though point count claims that it is worth five points).

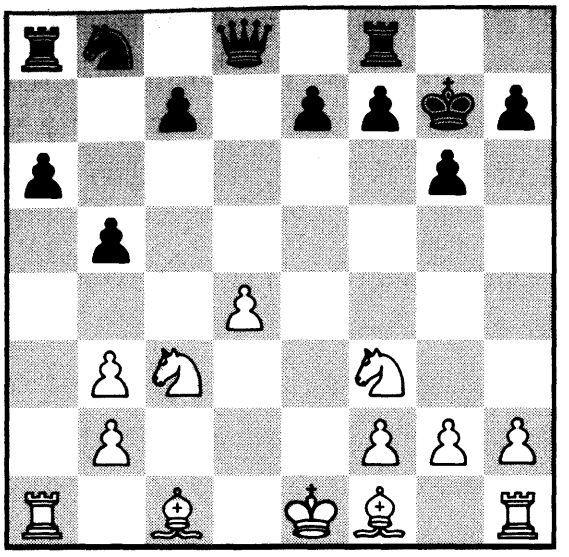
The piece to number ratios reflect the point count system:

King	=	priceless
Queen	=	nine points
Rook	=	five points
Bishop	=	three points
Knight	=	three points
Pawn	=	one point

One way to use this system is to add up number totals to see if a series of exchanges are worthwhile. For example, you end up giving away your Queen for the opponent's Rook, Knight and Bishop. Who got the better of the deal? Point count says that you did since the Queen is only worth nine points while the Rook (five), Knight (three) and Bishop (three) are worth a total of eleven. This gives you a two point advantage.

Cracks in the point count system appear when we look at situations where raw numbers don't allow us to see the big picture. Some examples:

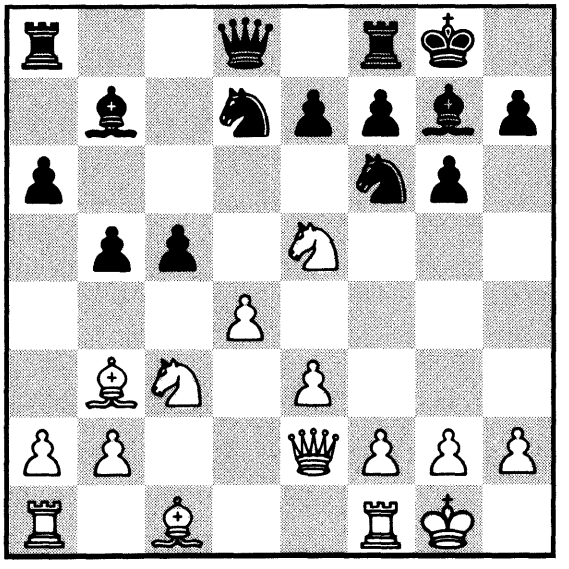
(307)



(A nail in POINT COUNT'S grave!)

In diagram 307 White has given up a Queen and a pawn for three minor pieces. Point count would say that Black has a one point advantage (the Queen and pawn = ten points. The three minor pieces = nine). However, strong players are well aware that three minor pieces are usually superior to a Queen due to their greater mobility (three little fighter jets beat a big bomber). The extra pawn doesn't carry enough weight to change this assessment.

(308)



(Strike two for POINT COUNT)

In diagram 308 White must not be tempted by **1.Nxf7? Rxf7 2.Bxf7+ Kxf7**. Inexperienced players love this kind of thing. Aside from the fact that they get a Rook and a pawn (six points) for two minor pieces (six points), they also draw the Black King towards the center.

Though point count wisdom tells us that the position is even after this exchange, any seasoned veteran knows that two minor pieces are usually superior to a Rook and a pawn in a middlegame since the two minor pieces outgun the lone Rook.

PSYCHOLOGY

Several hundred years ago a priest recommended facing your opponent towards the sun so that its rays would blind him and force him to blunder.

Today, club players screech out a never-ending litany of insults and jive blither or, if they are more modest types, they may tap songs on the table, make strange faces, stare at you while you are thinking, and . . . well, the list goes on and on and on.

Though we are told that chess is a game of pure skill, psychology also plays a major role in tournament chess. In lower level events, players have been known to cheat by removing pieces from the board when their opponents go to the bathroom. I have also witnessed one large chessplayer physically threaten his fearful adversary, who quickly hung all his pieces in terror.

At the highest levels a subtler brand of psychology comes into play. Deep opening preparations, geared towards a specific opponent, seek positions that make him uncomfortable. An unassuming phrase or glance might speak volumes and enrage the enemy on the other side of the table, all without doing anything overtly wrong.

Here are some general recommendations that might help you avoid an unpleasant moment or two:

1) Play the board, not the person. If you're facing a higher rated opponent, don't change your style out of fear. If you're facing a lower rated opponent, don't play below your ability due to overconfidence.

2) Always expect your opponent to play the best move. Make sure your move improves your position in some way, even if plays the best response.

3) If your opponent cheats in any way, immediately get the tournament director. Stay calm and don't make an emotional scene.

4) If your opponent continues the game while down several pieces, don't get angry about his lack of respect and don't let this situation affect your concentration. The correct reaction is to work hard to finish him off in the safest and most effective manner.

5) If you get freaked out by opponents with higher ratings, try not to look at their rating until after the game is finished. If you do this you might end up beating a guy, think he's a real fish, and then be shocked to find that you just upended a master!

6) You will find that a lion's heart and a fighting spirit can overcome tremendous difficulties on the chessboard. Never give up, hang on like grim death, and force your opponent to play like a genius if he's going to drag you down.

   A well-known Grandmaster once said, "If I lose a game, my opponents have to beat me three times: they have to beat me in the opening, then they have to beat me in the middlegame, and finally they have to play a perfect endgame."

7) If you're playing outdoors, don't forget to face your opponent towards the sun (it worked five hundred years ago and it will still work today)!

TIME PRESSURE

Tournament play demands the use of chess clocks, though time controls differ enormously from one event to another. Forty moves in two hours (each player has two hours, so one complete forty move session could last four hours) used to be typical, but now faster time controls have become popular (thirty minutes for the whole game is very common!).

Some players are well-known as "time pressure addicts"—they seem to get an adrenaline rush from skating on the edge of oblivion. These poor souls will always be in a frenzy because they have left themselves only one minute for ten or twenty moves. No cure exists for them, but other students of the game can (and should) avoid this malady.

Ways to manage your time:

1) Your time is there for you to use! Don't bash out one quick move after another. Doing this will avoid time pressure, but your moves will be so bad that you will lose most of the games you play.

2) Pay attention to the game and get to the heart of the matter as quickly as you can.

   After your opponent moves, always ask yourself, "Why did he play this?"

   Once you figure this out, don't react and forget about your own goals! Try hard to create some plan that improves the position of all your pieces. Take time to accomplish these goals, but don't expect perfection. Ultimately you must ask yourself, "What wonderful thing does this move do for my position?" If you can't answer this question, then you must look for something else to do.

Practice will enable you to make these difficult choices (and to find whole plans) with ever increasing speed.

3) Don't walk around too much when it's your opponent's turn. If your opponent makes his move while you are away, you might lose several useful minutes before you realize that you should be at the board working. A few minutes may not seem like much, but if you add these minutes up over the course of a whole game it can easily become the difference between victory and defeat.

4) A good opening repertoire will help you save time in the opening and good tactical vision will shave lots of time off the middlegame.

5) Blitz chess (each player is only given a few minutes to complete the whole game. Five minute chess is the most popular form of blitz) is a useful way to train yourself in several areas. You will get used to the clock; you will learn not to panic when you only have a few minutes left; you will be able to practice your openings in dozens of fast-food games; you will learn to see tactical ideas with ever-increasing speed.

6) If your opponent is in time pressure, don't move fast in an effort to stop him from thinking on your time. Doing this substantially adds to the possibility of you making some sort of game-losing blunder.

The correct strategy when facing an opponent who's low on time is to calmly take your time and make the very best moves you can. The odds are great that his time trouble will eventually lead to him making a very poor move.

QUIZZES ON PRACTICAL MATTERS

Answers to Quizzes on Practical Matters can be found on pages 359-360.

1) True or false: Amateurs should learn to offer draws whenever they are unsure about the merits of their position.

2) True or false: A fear of defeat is a sure fire way to end up a loser.

3) True or false: A draw can only be offered when it is your opponent's turn to move.

4) True or false: Always expect your opponent to play the very best move.

5) True or false: When your opponent is in time pressure, it is a good practice to move quickly. This prevents him from thinking on your time.

6) True or false: Three pawns is generally thought to be equal to a Bishop or a Knight.

7) True or false: A Rook, Knight and Bishop is thought to be about equal to a Queen.

8) True or false: Trading two minor pieces (which are worth a total of six points) for a Rook and a pawn (which are also worth a total of six points) is considered to be about an even trade.

9) True or false: Blitz chess is a good way to practice your openings and train yourself tactically.

10) True or false: If your opponent does something illegal, stay calm and immediately tell the director!

Answers to Quizzes

Opening Quizzes

1) True or false: One of Black's main ideas in the *Caro-Kann Defense* is to advance his f-pawn to f5 and start a kingside attack.

Answer: False! The *Caro-Kann* is a quiet positional opening. In general, Black's main breakthrough is based on a central ...c6-c5 advance.

2) True or false: The point of the opening phase of the game is to develop your pieces as quickly as possible. Once this is done, assess the situation and look for a middlegame plan.

Answer: False! You do want to develop your pieces as quickly as possible, but you must assess the upcoming situation before it happens. The idea of the opening is to create a good middlegame situation; don't let the opponent do this for you!

3) True or false: Quick development is not as important in closed positions as it is in opened ones.

Answer: True. The lack of files and diagonals prevents the opponent from rushing in and wiping your undeveloped army off the board.

4) True or false: You need a great memory if you intend to become proficient in any opening system.

Answer: False! Understanding the ideas behind the openings is much more important than memorizing the moves.

5) True or false: Huge opening databases have become extremely important in the world of professional opening preparation. In fact, they have become a necessity for any player wishing to compete in tournaments.

Answer: False! Huge databases have become important in professional chess, but amateurs don't have any need for them at all.

6) True or false: In Queen-pawn openings it is usually advisable to avoid blocking the c-pawns with a Knight.

Answer: True. Queen-pawn openings tend to lead to closed positions. Closed positions call for pawn play so that open files can be created for your Rooks. Keeping the c-pawns unblocked allows you to push them at the appropriate time. This increases the central pressure (Knights fit nicely behind them, not in front of them!) and allows you to open the c-file for your Rooks.

7) True or false: When both sides' pawns block the center, try to find a way to remove these pawns so that your Rooks can get into the game.

Answer: False! When the center is blocked, strive to create play and open files on the wings by advancing your pawns on that side of the board.

8) True or false: Openings that lead to the possession of weak pawns or weak squares should always be avoided.

Answer: False! Weak pawns and weak squares are not a bargain, but often you must accept a weakness in order to create one in the enemy camp.

9) True or false: In general, playing to control the center with your pieces and pawns is great opening strategy.

Answer: True. The center is the most important area of the board. Strive to control it and you will become a very strong player.

10) True or false: White should not let Black double his pawns in the *Nimzo-Indian Defense.*

Answer: False! White is usually willing to allow the doubling of his pawns because this leads to his getting the two Bishops in return.

11) True or false: In the *Ruy Lopez*, White's b1-Knight usually takes at least three moves to reach its ideal location.

Answer: True. In general, this Knight moves from b1 to d2 to f1 to g3. Taking several moves to get your pieces to their best squares is sometimes an excellent investment.

12) True or false: *Alekhine's Defense* allows White to build up a big pawn center in the hope of proving it to be a target instead of a strength.

Answer: True.

13) True or false: The *Torre Attack* is a Black system of development where the second player tries to create chances against the White King.

Answer: False! The *Torre Attack* is a White system of development (1.d4 Nf6 2.Nf3 e6 3.Bg5 d5 4.e3).

14) True or false: The *Petroff Defense* and the *Russian Game* are two names for the same opening.

Answer: True.

15) True or false: Only people with simian intelligence play the *Orangutan*, that's how it got its name.

Answer: False! It's still not 100% certain that players of simian intelligence are the only ones to use this opening. It got its name when Grandmaster Tartakower spotted an orangutan at the zoo.

16) True or false: *Metger's Unpin* is a technique where one Knight helps you break a Bishop pin against another Knight.

Answer: True. This idea is found in the *Four Knights Opening*.

17) True or false: The *Colle Opening* was first created when Hector Camacho's pet collie knocked over a pawn with its paw, thus giving its owner the idea for this system.

Answer: False! The creator was a Belgian master named Edgard Colle.

18) True or false: *Capablanca's Freeing Maneuver* is a way for Black to get more room for his pieces in the *Queen's Gambit Declined.*

Answer: True. Black has less space in this opening so he wisely tries to exchange some pieces and give himself a bit more breathing room.

119) True or false: The *Trompowski Opening* appears on the board after White's sixth move.

Answer: False! It arises on move two (1.d4 Nf6 2.Bg5)!

20) True or false: Gambits may offer cheap thrills, but they can never be recommended.

Answer: False! Some gambits can be recommended, some can't.

Middlegame Quizzes

1) True or false: It's wise to attack with pawns when the center is open.

Answer: False! When the center is open, you should attack with pieces.

2) True or false: It's wise to seek exchanges when your opponent has more space.

Answer: True. This is an excellent rule to follow.

3) When your opponent has two Bishops, what should you try to do?

Answer: Trade off one of his Bishops (for one of your own Bishops or Knights) and leave him with just one Bishop. Two Bishops control squares of both colors. One Bishop only controls one color and, as a result, is not nearly so dangerous as the two in tandom.

4) What piece is the best blockader of enemy passed pawns?

Answer: The Knight.

5) True or false: Bishops tend to be better than Knights in the endgame.

Answer: False! Sometimes they are, sometimes they aren't. As usual, it all depends on the particular position.

6) What was Steinitz's method of beating Knights?

Answer: Take away all their advanced support points.

7) What is ALEKHINE'S GUN?

Answer: Tripling on an open files with a Queen in back and the two Rooks in front.

8) True or false: Doubled pawns are best avoided.

Answer: False! Sometimes doubled pawns can prove useful (i.e., extra open files and increased central control).

9) What is a MINORITY ATTACK?

Answer: A minority attack makes use of a minority of pawns to attack a majority of pawns. The idea is to create weak pawns and weak squares in the opponent's camp.

10) True or false: A static advantage gives you excellent chances for a knockout blow.

Answer: False! A static advantage is a long-term plus. A dynamic advantage is the thing that offers you knockout potential.

11) True or false: A whole plan can be based on the acquisition of a single square.

Answer: True! Controlling key squares can be a very effective strategy.

12) True or false: Doubled or tripled pawns are known as PAWN ISLANDS.

Answer: False! This is actually a trick question because doubled or tripled pawns can be a pawn island. However, if they are connected to other pawns then they are not an island by themselves. Remember, that any group of connected, friendly pawns, is a pawn island.

13) True or false: HANGING PAWNS refer to pawns that are weak or vulnerable.

Answer: False! Hanging pawns can be weak and they can also be strong. Two pawns (usually a c-pawn and d-pawn), side by side on the fourth rank, isolated from other pawns, are known as hanging pawns.

14) True or false: A passed pawn is always a positive thing to possess.

Answer: False! A blockaded passed pawn can be a negative thing to own.

15) What piece is considered to be the "soul of chess?"

Answer: Philidor said, "Pawns are the soul of chess."

16) True or false: Knights don't work well with each other.

Answer: True. A Knight and Bishop work much better together than two Knights.

17) What is a MYSTERIOUS ROOK MOVE?

Answer: A mysterious Rook move refers to an odd-looking, prophylactic Rook move that makes no threat and serves no obvious defensive function.

18) What is the INITIATIVE?

Answer: The side that is calling the shots and is in control is said to have the initiative.

19) True or false: A Knight usually gains in value if pawns only exist on one side of the board.

Answer: True.

20) True or false: It's okay to be behind in development if the position is closed.

Answer: Usually true. Don't make it a habit, however.

21) True or false: Static advantages are always superior to dynamic advantages.

Answer: False.

22) What is a MATING NET?

Answer: By preventing the enemy King from escaping from an embattled, potentially disastrous area, you have created a mating net.

23) True or false: A sacrifice and a combination are more or less the same thing.

Answer: False! A combination always has a sacrifice in it, but a sacrifice can have nothing to do with a combination.

24) What delineates SPACE in a game of chess?

Answer: The territory behind your pawns is considered to be your space.

25) What in the world is OVERPROTECTION?

Answer: Overprotection refers to a strategically important pawn or square that is given more protection than it seemingly needs.

26) True or false: If you are castled and your opponent's King is still in the center, you should get excited and try to see if there's a way to blow him off the board!

Answer: True. An uncastled King should drive you into a killing frenzy!

27) True or false: Almost all combinations are based on some form of double attack.

Answer: True.

28) List the basic imbalances.

Answer: Pawn structure, material, superior or inferior minor pieces, space, pawn structure, development, initiative.

29) True or false: Open positions call for piece play rather than pawn play.

Answer: True. The many open files and diagonals make it imperative to get your pieces into the game as fast as possible.

30) What is a ZWISCHENZUG?

Answer: This is a German word meaning "in-between move."

ENDGAME QUIZZES

1) What piece is known as a HOG?

Answer: A Rook is sometimes refered to as a hog.

2) True or false: At times it is useful to take several moves to accomplish something that could have been done in just a couple.

Answer: True. This technique is known as cat and mouse. By slow-playing a position where your opponent is helpless, you put him off his guard and make him think that there is nothing to worry about. This weakens his sense of danger and makes him vulnerable to various unpleasant ideas.

3) True or false: When you are up material, it is always a good idea to trade off as many pieces and pawns as possible.

Answer: False! Exchanges are usually desirable when you have a material edge, but indiscriminate trades should always take a back seat to a sound plan.

4) True or false: The correct middlegame conduct for minor pieces sometimes varies in the endgame.

Answer: True. What's good for a Bishop or a Knight in the middlegame isn't always correct when the endgame appears.

5) True or false: A passed pawn is strongest in a Rook endgame.

Answer: False! A passed pawn is strongest in a Queen endgame.

6) What is an OUTSIDE PASSED PAWN?

Answer: The passed pawn that is furthest away from the Kings is known as an outside passed pawn.

7) True or false: A Queen and Bishop tends to be a better combination of forces than a Queen and Knight.

Answer: False! A Queen and Knight tends to be a better combination of forces than a Queen and Bishop.

8) True or false: When the endgame is reached, bring your King out slowly so that nothing bad happens to it.

Answer: False! The King should usually be rushed to the center (or the embattled area) when an endgame is reached.

9) True or false: A famous and very useful drawing technique while down a pawn is known as the LUCENA POSITION.

Answer: False! The Lucena Position gives the side with the extra pawn a forced win. The famous drawing technique while a pawn down in a Rook endgame is known as the Philidor Position.

10) True or false: Rooks always belong in front of passed pawns.

Answer: False! Rooks always belong behind passed pawns.

QUIZZES ON PRACTICAL MATTERS

1) True or false: Amateurs should learn to offer draws whenever they are unsure about the merits of their position.

Answer: False! It's best if amateurs play to win every position. You will learn much more by playing each position to its end than by offering a draw.

2) True or false: A fear of defeat is a sure fire way to end up a loser.

Answer: True. Play each game to win, no matter how powerful your opponent might be. The worst thing that can happen is a defeat, and we are all going to lose lots and lots of games.

3) True or false: A draw can only be offered when it is your opponent's turn to move.

Answer: False! You should only offer a draw during your move. The correct way to do this is to offer a draw, make your move and press your clock. Your opponent is then able to make this decision on his own time.

4) True or false: Always expect your opponent to play the very best move.

Answer: True. By expecting the best move, you will only come up with ideas that improve your position no matter what your opponent may try.

5) True or false: When your opponent is in time pressure, it is a good practice to move quickly. This prevents him from thinking on your time.

Answer: False! By moving quickly, you are failing to make use of your greatest asset: your extra thinking time. If possible, forget about your opponent's time pressure and use your time to make the best move you can find.

6) True or false: Three pawns is generally thought to be equal to a Bishop or a Knight.

Answer: True, though most experienced players would prefer to have the piece in the majority of cases.

7) True or false: A Rook, Knight and Bishop is thought to be about equal to a Queen.

Answer: False! These three pieces are usually far superior to a Queen.

8) True or false: Trading two minor pieces (which are worth a total of six points) for a Rook and a pawn (which are also worth a total of six points) is considered to be about an even trade.

Answer: False! Point count says it's even, but experienced players know that the two minor pieces are usually far superior to the Rook and pawn.

9) True or false: Blitz chess (five minutes each for the whole game) is a good way to practice your openings and train yourself tactically.

Answer: True.

10) True or false: If your opponent does something illegal, stay calm and immediately tell the director!

Answer: True. Avoid getting into a loud fight with the enemy! Go to the director and solve the problem as quickly as possible.

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